

ABSTRACT

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THREE DRAMATIC ADAPTATIONS OF JOAN OF ARC:

A SOCIOPHILOSOPHICAL AND POLITICAL STUDY

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This study researched the sociophilosophical and political evaluation of the French intelligentsia's reasons for misinterpreting Joan of Arc's story. George Bernard Shaw's *St. Joan*, André Obey's *La Fenêtre*, and Jean Anouilh's *L'Alouette* are the three playwrights and dramas about Joan of Arc that are studied in this work.

Shaw is English with different values and beliefs from Obey and Anouilh, who are French with rational and national visions that influenced their work after Shaw's *Saint Joan* became a success and earned him the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1925.

An analysis of some of their lifelong works was used to gather the reasons for this historical underestimation by the French intelligentsia who discriminated against Joan of Arc.

The research found that the difference between the two schools of philosophy as revealed in these dramatists' works, explains the humanist outcome of a five century old conflict between England and France.

The conclusions drawn from the findings show that Joan of Arc's story appealed to these playwrights where values and philosophies affected the attitudes they demonstrated in their plays.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Originally from the French colonial education system, the writer was exposed to the elementary school version of Joan of Arc's story and later in secondary school to French Rationalist philosophy. However, the three playwrights: George Bernard Shaw, André Obey and Jean Anouilh were not familiar to him because of the scientific nature of his formative education. The writer was introduced to French literature in graduate school and to the playwrights' works being studied there. Prior to this work, attention was given to this topic in a comparative study of his master's degree thesis.

Problem statement

As surprising as it may seem, after reading *Saint Joan*, of George Bernard Shaw, the writer's curiosity was highlighted, and judged Joan of Arc's story as a great misinterpretation in French literature. In spite of the notoriety and intellectual contribution to the world of literature, French intelligentsia did not render a service to redeem Joan of Arc as the Catholic Church did by elevating her to the rank of saint. That was the underlying mission of George Bernard Shaw in *Saint Joan*. As playwright George Bernard Shaw is defender of the underdog. After the success of *Saint Joan*, the whole French literary and sociopolitical language about Joan changes course from:

1- Uneducated country girl who made up stories

2- Being a missionary of God

3- Hearing voices that urge her to defend France in the One Hundred Year's War

4- Joan was not attractive enough to be concerned with teenager's problems of getting married or falling in love with a boyfriend.

Joan of Arc became a national heroine, praised and emulated by French political parties. The logic of this change of heart is substantiated by the adaptations of André Obey and Jean Anouilh.

The arguments of her critics were discrediting mainly they were coming from her own countrymen and two aspects had to be considered:

1. Cognitively it was a betrayal of the sacrifices Joan of Arc endured for a national cause.

2. The critics were destructive to French national pride, after George Bernard Shaw has popularized the merits of Joan's sacrifices.

Those arguments fueled the writer's interest and curiosity to undertake this study with this question in mind: what did the French intelligentsia miss? The purpose is to identify the weight of the answer to that question, after the French have taken into consideration the merits of *Saint Joan*.

There is much material available about George Bernard Shaw on this topic. Shaw is the greatest playwright of the twentieth century in the English-speaking world and second to Shakespeare in England.¹ Thinking about Shaw, one recalls two important points:

1 - His unorthodox philosophy of "Pragmatism" that presents people with the absurdity of their conventional way of thinking.

¹Anne Ridler, *Shakespeare Criticism: World Classics*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), xiii-401.

2 – His intelligence and commitment to the betterment of the human condition.

However, his philosophy is most used to prove or validate his defense of the underdog and his wittiness. This is specially seen in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *Misalliance* and *Pygmalion*. *Mrs. Warren's profession* is 117 years old and not yet drained of topical resonance. *Mrs. Warren's profession* is the world's oldest profession. It is a discussion of prostitution that got it banned in London for 30 years after Shaw wrote it. A more likely reason is Shaw's condemnation of the economic and social class systems in Victorian England that, in his view, might make prostitution seem one of the more sensible of the few avenues open to poor young women. In *Misalliance*, Shaw ironically objects that marriage between members of the great and good middle class with one of the various and corrupt aristocracies would be a misalliance. In a paraphrase, Shaw believes "if marriages were made by putting all of the men's names into a sack and the women's names in another, and having them taken out by a blind-folded child like lottery numbers, there would be just as high a percentage of happy marriages as we have now." Shaw's plays take the readers by the hand lead them to his plots while building his case and he presents his paradoxes to make his point. He received a great deal of attention from admirers or detractors with that strategy.

An admirer, Archibald Henderson, a college Professor from North Carolina, devoted some six hundred pages to George Bernard Shaw, his life, and works as a critical biography, a daunting but rewarding endeavor to the extent he came close to being the first to put in writing a sociophilosophical and political study of Shaw's works. However, his undertaking was all about Shaw's works and life so that *Saint Joan* was not set apart as this research intends to do here. Henderson's objectives were to know what makes

Shaw a resilient playwright and achiever in a field that was not chartered to success for an Irishman. Henderson said: During the progress of the Shaw biography, he conquers America, then Germany, then England and lastly, the Scandinavian countries and continental Europe. No British dramatist-not even Shakespeare had conquered the world during his lifetime.² To that description Shaw stated: "Henderson began by hailing me as an infant prodigy, and ended by pronouncing me a genius."³

The next work was from his political adversary Gilbert Keith Chesterton.

Chesterton was a political thinker and adversary of Shaw with whom he had some heated political debates on their respective views (Liberalism versus Conservatism). Being political adversaries they had debates that were not honest but relevant to the doctrine of their respective political party. For example, Chesterton felt that: the whole modern world has divided itself into Conservatives and Progressives. The business of Progressives is to go on making mistakes. The business of the Conservatives is to prevent the mistakes from being corrected. There is prolific documentation on Shaw and his works but this writer did not find any work similar to his endeavor.

Shaw's primary concerns as playwright were to denounce the social inequalities and prejudices in Victorian culture. He intended to educate British society through his plays; most of his plays revolved around the mind-set of upsetting mainstream political and religious leaders. When it comes to *Saint Joan*, Shaw seized the opportunity of the canonization of Joan of Arc as Saint Joan in 1923 to voice his concerns:

1 – Religious: hypocrisy of the Catholic Church

² Archibald Henderson, *George Bernard Shaw: His Life Works: A Critical Bibliography* (Cincinnati: Stewart and Kidd Co., 1911), vii.

³ Ibid., v.

2 – The Impact and Criticism of feudalism on Joan of Arc's story

3 – Setting straight Joan of Arc's record from hero to common person

4 – The class struggle Joan of Arc faced and to facilitate her martyrdom.

Shaw's judgment of Joan's trial is motivated by his desire to expose the hypocrisy of the Church by burning and elevating Joan to the rank of saint. He wanted also to validate the necessary needs of reform that can cause change of heart in his native Ireland. To elucidate his goals convincingly, he brought up some background of Joan's story using the philosophy of historical materialism with its principal argument of class struggle, which plagued the comprehension of the French intellectuals of Joan of Arc's intervention in France's history as a dominant character. The character, Joan of Arc, has not ceased to reinvent herself through the ages to suit everyone's struggle. Shaw was defender of the underdog; his first celebrated play, *Pygmalion*, for which he was awarded an Oscar is a prime example—a work based on the classical myth of human relationships in a social world. Phonetics Professor Henry Higgins tutors a young lady Doolittle with cockney accent, not only in the refinement of speech, but in refinement also of her manners. When the result produces a very ladylike Miss Doolittle, the lessons learned become much more far reaching. Professor Higgins falls in love and Miss Doolittle turns down his proposal and marries a man of her condition. That is a Cinderella story that presents Professor Higgins to the absurdity of his culture.

Shaw's theatrical inspiration clearly is his own life. Born in an environment of material lack, young Shaw starts working at an early age, after his father has fallen on hard times. Growing up, he sees his native homeland Ireland torn by religious war. Shaw attends Catholic as well as Protestant schools and once migrates to London; he is

influenced by his mother and his two sisters as bread winners, so he acquires feminist consciousness. Those experiences are reflected in his first plays: *Widow's House* and, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, both of which attack social hypocrisy, while plays like *Arms and The Man*, and *The Man of Destiny* are less fiercely critical. In his later period plays discussion sometimes drowns the drama, especially in *Back to Methuselah* (1912), although in the same period he works on his masterpiece *St. Joan* (1923), in which he rewrites the well-known story of the French maiden and extends it from the Middle Ages to the present.

His contemporaries had many opportunities to observe Shaw as a controversialist and as a man of Victorian Vanity. According to them, Shaw had three phases in his life. First he was a music critic, Fabian socialist and novelist. The world saw him as a writer of comedies in which he intended to lead the world to seriousness through wit. During the third and last phase he appeared as prophet, demanding equal admiration for St. Joan of Orleans and St. Joseph of Moscow. By that time he had lost all distinction between a kind Christian and a cruel communist, which many of his contemporaries disliked.⁴

It is a combination of the dramatic, the comic, and the social corrective that gives Shaw's comedies their special flavor.

André Obey the second playwright, on the other hand, is a neoclassicist who believes in the noble lies (nation, religion and values). Those values are a very important part of his lifelong works. He uses the values of his upbringing, love, family and religious morals to make his point to society and his readers. Obey's concern is *Peace* at any cost, and that can be seen in *La Fenêtre* in spite of old man Thibaut's vengeful attitude toward the English. France was torn by political unrest at the abrupt end of her colonial empire and the interior political division during the transitional period was in

⁴ PSRemesh Chandra, May 16, 2011 in Wikinut.

turmoil (1944-1958).⁵ Obey, during the First World War, experienced human despair and suffering. He endured two injuries that hospitalized him and almost incapacitated him intellectually.⁶ Those intangible facts of his life, values and France's sociopolitical status compel him to promote peace in his plays.

Still, Obey's works rest unknown to the non-French-speaking world, causing a paucity of material on his account. The only materials available to this work were the translations in English of six of his plays by Earle Clowney and Judith Suther in 1975, and Clowney's 1968 dissertation and some personal letters exchanged between Obey and Clowney. For the most part, sources that do mention Obey, contain merely a paragraph or two, praising briefly his success with *La Souriante Madame Beudet*, *Noé*, *Le Viol de Lucrèce*, *Une Fille pour du vent*, or his very successful adaptations from Shakespeare, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Tennessee Williams, Reginald Rose, and so on. It appears that critics exhaust their energy exalting such writers, often not so much for their contribution to drama, but out of respect for their achievement in other fields. The regrettable aspect of this situation is that new dramatists of merit and distinction frequently are neglected or sacrificed in order that the public may continue to see the names that are already familiar. Such, clearly, has been the case with André Obey, whose works span almost a half century.⁷

⁵ Jean-Jacques Becker, *Histoire de la France depuis 1945* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1992), 41-76.

⁶ Earle D. Clowney, *The Plays of Andre Obey: An analytical Study* (Diss. University of Missouri, 1968), 17.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

André Obey addresses his concerns through a theological showcase using illustrations from the Bible.⁸ His classical school of thought is explained better by his use of Bible characters to justify human shortcomings. He is reminiscing about the well-known line in Greek philosophy from *The Republic* that praises the relevancy of the use of the noble lies (Nation, Religion and Value). That relevancy has been of great interest to political critics of modern demagoguery. In many instances such dependence is for rhetorical purposes. Those values are a very important part of Obey's plays. He uses religious morals to make his point to the society and the reader. His concern is to bring a peaceful closure to the dilemma of choice of a leader in the aftermath of French liberation.⁹ As a result, the Fourth Republic government was rightfully named the most unstable period in France. As he said himself about writing *La Fenêtre*, "I was inspired to write *La Fenêtre* after seeing staged on television *Saint Joan* of Shaw."¹⁰ In 1959 France needed, at the abrupt end of her colonial empire, to pacify the Francophones and polish her image in the international arena (United Nations).¹¹ Also, the human despair and suffering Obey endured as a soldier in World War I reinforced his pacifist conviction.¹²

Anouilh, the third playwright, uses *L'Alouette* to carry out his mission of self-appointed as a political counselor to France, a role Anouilh cherishes because he does not

⁸ Obey uses religious themes to express his messages in his plays.

⁹ Jean-Jacques Becker, *Histoire politique de la France depuis 1945* (Paris: Armand Collins, 1988), 26-40.

¹⁰ Earle D. Clowney, *The Plays of André Obey: An Analytical Study*; (Diss. University of Missouri, 1968), 135.

¹¹ Becker, 41.

¹² Clowney, 17.

trust himself to be a leader. Will Frenchmen listen to his advice? That is the question. In the past they have been entertained with *Antigone* under the Nazi occupation. Anouilh is loyal to France and her melodramatic version of Joan of Arc, the defenseless teenager who was burned at the stake and canonized for “*l'excellence de ses vertus théologiques*.”¹³

Anouilh is the second best-known of the three playwrights because of his ability to adjust to a changing world and the daring attitude of his characters to solve the conflicts with which they are faced. Anouilh's basic concepts are present from the beginning and have not changed fundamentally in the course of almost thirty years. This fact has led to some degree of repetition, which tends to give unity to Anouilh's theater. He develops personal mythology, composed of characters, situations, and language which are peculiar to his world and reflect effectively his view of life. *Médée* (1946), *Antigone* (1942), Joan of Arc in *L'Alouette* expresses as themes that make it possible to divide these plays into several periods, based upon their fundamental similarities. Anouilh uses *L'Alouette* (1953) to fulfill his self appointed function of gadfly of French politics while raising the conscience of the nation by making a suitable choice of leaders so history will not repeat itself. France needed honest leaders not some collaborators disguised in critical moments such as the end of the Fourth Republic. On the pessimistic side of his vision and philosophy, Anouilh did not trust Frenchmen. Maximilien Robespierre is the prime example of his distrust; he projects himself as the only one who has an historical conscience. Anouilh looks upon the members of the French political avant-garde class with amused condescension, describing them as neo-romantics and escapists.¹⁴

¹³ Jean Anouilh, *L'Alouette* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1953), 6.

¹⁴ Giraudoux, Raymond and Mankin, *A Critical Bibliography of French Literature Vol. 4* (N. Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1979), 1278.

The escapist characters are in a group of plays written in the thirties—they stress the plight of man trying to escape from his past, sometimes succeeding but more often than not, failing like *Traveler without Luggage* (1937) which is the story of Gaston Renaud, a World War I veteran who suffers from amnesia. He recovers his former identity as Jacques Renaud, a cruel and violent young man who kills animals for sport. He has difficulty to re-concile his current personality (purity) with that of his past.

The writer will relate the three versions of the story of Joan of Arc to the social movement that calls for changes in ideology and philosophy on the European continent. This social movement represents the struggle of the feminist and all underdogs. France's view of Joan's life essentially is dominated by the intellectual and literary elite during much of the twentieth century.

Simone de Beauvoir eloquently explained Joan of Arc's dilemma in *The Second Sex* as:

Society, being codified by man, decrees that woman is inferior: she can do away with this inferiority only by destroying the male's superiority. She sets about mutilating, dominating man, she contradicts him, she denies his truth and his values. But in doing this she is only defending herself; it was neither a changeless essence nor a mistaken choice that doomed her to immanence, to inferiority. They were imposed upon her. All oppression creates a state of war. And this is no exception. The existent who is regarded as inessential cannot fail to demand the reestablishment of her sovereignty.¹⁵

The underlying assumption here is that life and art are not to be equated, but the two are intimately connected because they influence each other. Who were George Bernard Shaw, André Obey and Jean Anouilh, and did they establish connection between their life experience and art as playwrights?

¹⁵ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1989), xxii.

The Second Chapter discusses the reasons that made Joan of Arc an attractive subject to these three playwrights. The main body of this work is broken into three major sections. Chapter three contains the analysis of George Bernard Shaw's major sociophilosophical and political concerns through his principal works, showing how his belief system set out to use Joan of Arc's story as background of *Saint Joan*, the masterpiece that earned him the Nobel Prize of literature. Chapter four will be devoted to the analysis of the life, work and social concerns of André Obey, particularly those he expresses in *La Fenêtre*; Chapter Five deals with the analysis of Jean Anouilh's political view in *l'Alouette* to validate his concerns as political counselor.

The study of each playwright's life and philosophy will enable one to see the congruence between the moral or ethical conclusions they reach in their plays, and how the motif of their choice of themes leans toward entertaining and improving of human's condition. The sociopolitical morals that they express through the play (plays), in a sense, are the ends they have in mind. Playwrights do not often think consciously about their themes as they write. Their personal values are integrated enough into how they live their lives that, these themes flow into the play as the dialogue goes on the page. That is why the same themes often show up in a writer's work from one play to the next, such as Jean Anouilh's. Anouilh's plays do not reflect reality in the sense of fidelity to the detail of the common man's everyday experience. They do not attempt to be an explanation of human motives in terms of psychological realism or involve themselves in social problems. They express instead a significant distortion of reality, a distortion conveyed through extremely stylized dramatic conventions.

Much has been written about Anouilh's obsession¹⁶ with purity, but what has been neglected is the way in which this obsession acts as a unifying and organizing principle in his work, determining the structure of his plays and intimately related to the character of the dramatic conventions which he exploits.

The focus of this paper will emphasize three interrelated features of the sociophilosophical and political thought of George Bernard Shaw in *Saint Joan*, André Obey in *La Fenêtre* and Jean Anouilh in *L'Alouette*. Each playwright addresses the trial and execution of Joan of Arc and the underlying political messages to be learned from the given social contexts. They (Obey and Anouilh) wrote in codified language (symbolism) of neo-conservatism. In the second chapter, this paper will first analyze:

- 1 - The reasons of the attraction of these three playwrights were attracted to Joan's story by analyzing some of their plays to recognize what beliefs they reveal in their plays;
- 2 - Secondly, the implicit claims that there is and must be a philosophical elite in society, whose leadership is paramount in societal progress;
- 3 - Thirdly, the paper discusses the argument that such an elite must undertake the engineering of salutary opinion in the society.

The prescription of the elite ought to rely on 'noble lies,' as Plato advises, in order to keep stable the social order. These features are particularly relevant for Shaw to the post canonization of Joan of Arc and the political turmoil of France's Fourth Republic at the end of War World II for Obey and Anouilh. The three playwrights were inspired by the trial of Joan of Arc. The writer believes the playwrights use Joan of Arc's story as a background of the primary concerns they want to address. As Plato observed, social

¹⁶ *Oxford Journal. French Studies*, Vol. XI No.2 April 1957.

decisions are philosophical at their core. Philosophy is born out of the concerns and thoughts of Socrates, Plato's teacher.

In the history of theater, there is a long tradition of performance addressing issues of currents central to society itself, encouraging consciousness and social change. The political satire performed by the comic poets in the theaters, had considerable influence on public opinion in the Athenian democracy.¹⁷

Those earlier Western dramas, arising out of the polis, or democratic city-states of Greek society, were performed in amphitheaters, central arenas used for theatrical performances, religious ceremonies and political gatherings; these dramas had a ritualistic and social significance that enhanced the relevance of the political issues being examined. One must marvel at the open-minded examination of the controversial and critical topics that took place right in the political heart of Athenian society, allowing a courageous self-examination of the first democracy trying to develop and refine itself further. Shakespeare is author of political theater to some academic scholars, who observe that his history plays examine the machinations of personal drives and passions determining political activity, and many of the tragedies, such as *King Lear* and *Macbeth* dramatize political leadership and complex subterfuge of human beings driven by the lust for power; for example, it is observed that class struggle in the Roman Republic is central to *Coriolanus*.¹⁸

Shaw's primary concern was the social reform of Victorian culture of theater (from its simple social irrelevancy to social consciousness of the theatergoers). He intended to

¹⁷ A. Henderson - J. Henderson, B. Zimmerman – S. Halliwell, *Comic Hero versus Political Elite* (Bari: Levante, 1993), 307-19.

¹⁸ Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 1.

educate British society in his plays; most of his plays revolve around the mind-set of upsetting main stream leaders. When it comes to *Saint Joan*, Shaw seizes the opportunity of the canonization of Joan of Arc as Saint Joan in 1923 to voice his concerns:

- 1 – Religious war the Catholic Church waged in Ireland
- 2 – How the feudal rulers controlled medieval society
- 3 – Rectification of the heroic sacrifice of Joan
- 4 – Applicability of the class struggle to Joan's trial.

George B. Shaw shed light on the history of Joan of Arc by making the life of Joan of Arc worthy to be believed from its form of epic. Shaw's judgment of the trial was motivated by his desire to reveal the hypocrisy of the Catholic Church and also to promote a new approach to religiosity in his native Ireland.

Throughout the history of Western literature, authors have drawn upon their religious heritage: Chaucer, Spencer, Milton, Tennyson, Hawthorne, and Melville are but a few names on the list of distinguished writers who have worked explicitly and creatively with religious beliefs and symbols in English and American literature. This paper looks also at some of Shaw's concerns, inherent in the social fabric of his dear Ireland. Chesterton, in his book about Shaw, names the three columns that support why Shaw wrote as he did because he is:

- 1- Puritan
- 2- Irish
- 3- Progressive.

Obey addresses his concerns in a theological showcase with illustrations from the bible.¹⁹ The notorious line in Greek philosophy from *The Republic* the noble lies (Nation, Religion and Value) has been a great interest of political critics of modern demagoguery. In many instances, such dependence is for rhetorical purposes. Those values are a very important part of Obey's plays. He uses religious morals to make his points society and the reader. His concern was to bring a peaceful issue to France's dilemma after the liberation. As he said himself about writing *La Fenêtre*, "I was inspired to write *La Fenêtre* after seeing *Saint Joan* of Shaw."²⁰ France needed in 1959 at the abrupt end of her colonial empire to pacify the Francophones and polish her image in the international arena (United Nations). Also, the human despair and suffering Obey endured as a soldier in World War I reinforced his pacifist conviction.

Anouilh uses *L'Alouette* (1953) as a political forum to criticize the Vichy Government during the Nazi occupation--a forum that raised the national of conscience to dispute the leaders France needed at a critical time such as the Fourth Republic. Anouilh, with his pessimistic philosophy, projects himself as the only one who has historical conscience. He looks upon the avant-garde of French politicians with amused condescension, describing them as neo-romantic and escapists.

The writer will relate the three versions of the story of Joan of Arc's story to the social movement that calls for changes in ideology and philosophy on the European continent. The underlying assumption here is, life and art are not to be equated, but the two are intimately connected because they influence each other. Who were George

¹⁹ Obey uses religious themes to express his messages in his plays.

²⁰ Earl D. Clowney, 70.

Bernard Shaw, André Obey and Jean Anouilh, and what was the connection between their lives and art as playwrights?

In Shaw's plays (*Man and Superman*) the woman pursues her goal of marriage, against all moral standards. Shaw says society's shock at his heroine's pursuit is just another example of man's hypocrisy because if women held the same moral standard as men, the human race would die out. If literature portrayed real life instead of rejoicing in woman's illusory beauty, artists would fear women's pursuits. Thus, Shaw concludes that in the instance of sex, art does not imitate life. Shaw changes that view with this play because although he has been refined by literature, he understands where everyone before him has gone wrong. He acknowledges that there is a political aspect of the relationship between men and women, but he does not have time to fully deal with the political question in this play (*Man and Superman*). He thinks that the masses have diluted politics because there are no more arranged marriages and interbreeding between political families. Although the masses have earned the right to enter the political fray, they obviously are not confident in their ability, because they do not elect members of their own class to parliament. This highlights the class struggle that helps shape society.

Shaw remarks that our society is quickly following the road of Greece and Rome. He thinks the newspapers are inaugurating decadence and that the people are only interested in riches. He believes that society has given up on philosophy and following the truth and instead has become so selfish that our society is doomed to fall much in the same way ancient societies fell. Shaw says he has incorporated many of his leanings in his play as other authors do, but he says he has taken it one step further than other authors have. Instead of just saying that, his Don Juan (*Man and Superman*) is a pamphleteer, he

has included his handbook as an appendix to the play in order to show the audience that his character has real ideas. He admits that he has pillaged from many other authors, and he says he admires ancient authors more than he admires the romantics. All that being said, Shaw says the most important artistic determination is the author's opinion. Shaw states he has not relied, as so many authors do, on recreating another's style of writing but rather has created his own unique style.²¹

In *La Fenêtre*, Obey argues a statement based on an ideal world not on the truth and the supposed effects of belief in the statement. Plato presents a hypothetical stratified society as ideal. In order to keep this society together, the lie that the stratification is due to God is taught to all the people.²² One characteristic about the noble lie is that it always assumes that the target audience consists entirely of complete idiots. This weakens its effectiveness, because a substantial number of people are capable of thought. Upon detecting a lie, they are likely to dismiss out of hand the truth of any other statement from the same source. They might even have an emotional reaction to being treated as idiots. This can cause problems for noble liars. When this happens, noble liars generally use one of two countermeasures. One is simply to make explicit the assumption of idiocy. If one has experienced a condom breakage, then it is stated that one, *ipso facto*, must be too stupid to read the directions in a box of condoms. Alternately, one may be invited to join and promote the conspiracy for the common good, with a nudge and a wink.

Noble lies can often be detected by the language used. The words "policy" and "position" are often good indicators. Furthermore, it is sometimes against the law not to

²¹ *Man and Superman*: Introduction. "Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkoski. Vol. 6 Detroit: Gale, 1998. enotes. Com. January 2006, 23 August 2009. <http://www.enotes.com/man-superman/introduction>.

²² G. M. A. Grube trans. *Plato's Republic* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1974), 141.

tell a Noble Lie. In such cases, there may be a statement similar to "The Federal government requires us to state that. . . ." Some ideas, such as fables and mythological stories, are designed so that their truth value is unimportant. Aesop's fable of the Fox and the Grapes is not lessened by the fact that foxes do not normally eat grapes and cannot talk. Nor would it be improved, and in fact would it be ruined, if one were to point out that "fox" is in many languages part of the word for "fruit bat." The Lie is necessary, Plato argues, in order to keep a stable social structure. In Plato's mind, the noble lie is a religious lie that is fed to the masses to keep them under control and happy with their situation in life.

Plato did not believe most people were smart enough to look after their own and society's best interest. The few smart people of the world needed to lead the rest of the flock, Plato said, and the noble lie had to continue. In chapter five this paper draws a parallel between the philosophy beyond the Noble lies and the sociophilosophy of the three playwrights. It argues that at the core of Obey's and Anouilh's conception of social opinion lies the ideas of 'nation' and 'identity.' They proposed the mobilization under the leadership of an elite whose role is to direct the production and reproduction of social identity to avoid relativism. Their role is to make policy proposals intelligible to the populace in particular ways. In this way, drawing on the work of David Campbell, Judith Butler and other critical theorists, we see that there are significant parallels which may be drawn between Shaw, Obey and Anouilh's ideas about an elite which sculpts social opinion.

As Wayne Dyer said, one does not describe the world as it is, but as one sees it. These three playwrights from three different schools of thought are proof of that

statement. This dissertation will analyze in chapter two how Shaw, Obey and Anouilh became interested in Joan of Arc.

CHAPTER 2

THEATRICAL APPEAL OF JOAN OF ARC FOR SHAW, ANOUILH AND OBEY

The social revolution that swept European countries in the late 18th century was one of the ramifications of the French Revolution. After that time, people began questioning authorities and demanding with conviction their political rights as humans, as citizens and to have a choice of different opinions. That historical current was not isolated. In literature, the evidence of these social protests seems conflicting. At first glance, it seems to be a generation conflict, such as: classicism is challenged by neoclassicism; agricultural society is opposed to the industrialized one, and in terms of social progress by means of Marxist philosophy, the proletariat opposed the capitalist. The fundamental ideas of all these oppositions fostered a rebellious behavior toward the established order. Historically, Joan of Arc's life was an attractive subject to validate everyone's struggle against authority. It stands to reason, as Shaw says, that Joan of Arc was the first Protestant who stood up to the Church and its authorities. That is to say, she is the role model whose struggle is central to the three plays and who also serves as subject for every revolutionary cause: from woman's emancipation to questioning authority in general. Those views are well elucidated by Shaw in *Saint Joan*.¹

¹ George B. Shaw, *Saint Joan: A Chronicle Play in Six Scenes and an Epilogue* (N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1923), 3-47.

There is no doubt that these three playwrights wanted to make an impact on the theatergoers one way or the other in their respective countries. Joan of Arc's trial was an ideal example to appeal to the mass's emotions and a choice available to validate the claims of its messages. For nearly six hundred years, Joan of Arc has been an inspiration to writers, playwrights, and cinematographers, because what she stood for changes the course of more lives than the burning of a young girl. She was an independent, unattached woman who achieved success in a male arena, thanks to her exceptional abilities and unshakable confidence. These qualities caught the attention and admiration of writers and enhanced the world's vision of Joan. Film critic Robin Blaetz explores the uses of Joan's emulation as it has defined the place of women in relation to war. According to Robin Blaetz, Joan has been a popular cinematic image because she links romance to war, but at the same time sends the message that woman's only role in war is self-sacrifice.² For example, at the close of World War II there was a perceived social need to clear the workforce of women in order to make place for returning male veterans. In 1948, therefore, the kind of heroism that Joan stood for was "retreat from battle and return to conventional woman's roles."³ Cinematographers are free to show Joan as a heroic figure because her success in the movie sphere is brief and suitably punished at the end. Luc Besson in *The Messenger* portrays Joan as neither heroic nor saintly. Besson's nontraditional interpretation of the historical facts and his studied manipulation of archetypal imagery, redefine Joan of Arc as an unbalanced woman not explicable by

² Robin Blaetz, *Vision of the Maid: Joan of Arc in American Film and Culture* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2002), 50-52.

³ Susan E. Linville, *Feminism, Film, Fascism: Women's Autobiographical Film in Postwar Germany* (Denver: University of Colorado 1948), 14.

Freudian psychology. In stripping Joan of her heroism, Besson's film works to extinguish her value as either religious icon or female role model and reshapes the popular image of Joan of Arc.⁴ The religious aspect of Joan's mission is both acknowledged and unquestioned by the early films. De Mille's character Joan in Besson's film uses special effects to show Joan's saintly and angelic guardians and to illustrate her powers of prophecy.⁵

To Shaw's account, there was a great dissatisfaction with all the previous historical and fictional accounts of Joan of Arc's life; in essence we witness a Protestant take on the saint's actions while rejecting (what he described as) virulent anti-Catholicism in the Victorian Protestant perspective; briefly elucidated religious, historical and political aspects of medieval Catholic Christendom, often by comparing it to Shaw's modern times; and tops it off by concurrently explaining certain authorial decisions and puncturing shallow, fashionable interest in theater. It may seem like quite a lot to take on. Shaw deals with his many points in only one or two pages, often fewer, and reveals a wonderful capacity for treating serious ideas both somberly and with humor, which is reflected in the play.⁶

Why did Shaw pick this particular medieval saint? That is the question Louis Crompton asks in *Shaw the Dramatist*.⁷ He said perhaps we may best see what Shaw is

⁴ Blaetz, 50-52..

⁵ Cecil B. DeMille's *Joan the Woman*, 1916, is concerned with issues of gender and ways in which Joan of Arc's androgyny, virginity and sacrificial victimhood were evoked in relation to evolving roles of women during wars throughout the twentieth century.

⁶ Shaw's approach was to portray Joan as a real human being flawed with a stubborn streak that would ultimately lead to her downfall.

⁷ Louis Crompton, *Shaw the Dramatist* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1969), 193.

about if we look at his play in the light of the philosophy of history. John Stuart Mill points out these ages of faith and of doubt have tended to succeed each other historically. Nowhere is this theory better borne, more trenchantly debunked, or more piously exalted. Rationalistic ages have deprecated Joan of Arc, while the alternating ages of faith have reaffirmed their belief in her greatness. To see the contrast clearly, we need only set Voltaire's portrait of Joan alongside Schiller's or Southey's: the eighteenth century put her back on a pedestal. On the one hand we have a hilarious spoofing of her story on the other a spurious romantic idealization.⁸

Shaw's relation to these various currents of faith and skepticism is by no means simple, since he was at the same time the spiritual heir of the Enlightenment and of the transcendental reaction against it. Irish historians do not generally identify religious liberalism as a feature of the 1820s. Instead, they have mapped religious conflict onto increasingly binary conflicts in the socioeconomic, cultural, and political spheres. The "Second Reformation" missionary movement put evangelicals and Catholics on a direct collision course and consequently, historians have argued that it was a key factor in the emergence both of Irish Catholic nationalism and Protestant defensive cooperation. In the earlier time, the Crusades, however, also produced a strong Protestant backlash alongside the growing sectarian conflict. In County Limerick, for example, two versions of the Church of Ireland opposition emerged in 1820, among high church clergy, including Bishop Jebb, and among liberal Protestant gentlemen. Instead of closing down debate into rigid binary opposition along sectarian lines, the Limerick evidence shows that the Crusades produced a much more complex, religious, social, and political debate than historians have recognized which, in turn, made possible a wider range of responses

⁸ Ibid., 50.

to key Irish problems. Consider instead that sectarianism is not the source of the problems but merely a symptom of the most crucial issue facing Ireland - the incessant British imperial presence. Nationalists have been oppressed with laws designed to discriminate, censor and restrict, but unionists--those who have maintained their loyalty to the Crown-- likewise have been oppressed, the British manipulating them into perpetuating societal divisions which keep them and their neighbors apart. Shaw had in mind the Irish religious struggle when he wrote the prologue to *Saint Joan*.⁹

As we would expect, such diverse modern artists have interpreted Joan's story from various, highly personal angles. Compare the example of Anatole France's Jeanne d'Arc, a hardy country girl, with Shaw's extraordinarily sophisticated soldier-heretic. In opposition to Mark Twain's pious maid (what Shaw called an unimpeachable American school teacher in armor) stands Brecht's grotesquely parodied evangelist, Joan of Arc, who comes to learn that saintly suffering is foolish and only violence will change the world. Like most artists drawn to Joan, Shaw has taken what interested him, using her story to define his own recurring artistic preoccupations. In the process, he has created one of the most significant and beautiful works in historical playwrighting and one of the noblest Joans in our century's art.¹⁰

George Bernard Shaw took on the Victorian theater, which he found boring by the lack of relevancy to the life and need of the theatergoers. Shaw has the leading role in creating a platform to the audience of his plays. His personal story makes a good

⁹ "The Countries of the UK." www.statistics.gov.uk-geography-beginners guide to UK. Geography. UK. Statistics Authority (11 November 2005).

¹⁰ In *Saint Joan*, Shaw created one of the few successful "History plays" since Shakespeare's time. Julia Mathews 36 www.bravoencore.co.uk/sierra.html.

beginning to the changes that took place in British theater. It is a pertinent story as it provides us with some understandings of his drive and conviction. It is the story metaphorically of David, who through persistence was able to overcome Goliath.¹¹

George Bernard Shaw's writings were out of his experience, but *Saint Joan* was fueled by the desire to discredit the religious practices and the Church. Shaw's philosophy was a pragmatic one, geared toward the goal to reform Victorian Society and its misconceptions to stigmatize the rest of the world.¹²

Gilbert K. Chesterton, the greatest critic of Shaw and his works, bestowed on him three attributes that summarize Shaw's interest. He said Shaw's vision is impaired by the following attributes:

- 1- A Puritan
- 2- A progressive
- 3- An Irishman¹³

These three attributes sum up Shaw's life well as a playwright. The Puritan asked for reforms; so did Shaw. As a cornerstone of his pragmatic philosophy, Shaw's life and plays were about fracturing the Canon.

The first attribute—that of a Puritan is a person regarded as excessively strict in morals and religion. However Shaw was the Puritan loaded with rhetoric, who saw things or social conditions from a perspective different from those in the main stream of life. He became defender of the fraction of society that is looked down upon: prostitutes,

¹¹Jack Bawling, *Critical Essay*, "Outcast London on Victorian and Edwardian Stage," 3.

¹² Archibald Henderson, *George B. Shaw: His Life and Works* (Cincinnati: Stewart & Kidd Company, 1911), 467.

¹³Gilbert K. Chesterton, *George B. Shaw* (N.Y.: John Lane Co., 1909), 18.

poor people, people who are discriminated against for gender, origin, religion and accents. He upset, however, religious and political authorities. He made many political enemies and also gained many followers that gave him a seat in the English Parliament with a large number of women's votes. Shaw's Puritanism was the defense of underdogs of society. He broadened his scope to French history that had been intellectually attractive to him and tackled the wrong done to a medieval heroine: Joan of Arc. Joan's life, trial and the conditions surrounding her execution were enough to make *Saint Joan* the success of his literary career: winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1925. His friend and political adversary G. K. Chesterton saw Shaw's Puritanism otherwise. Chesterton wrote extensively about Shaw and his works. He elaborated also on why Shaw wrote the way he did. He started with how Shaw introduced his plays:

It is now partly possible to justify the Shavian method of putting the explanations before the events. I can now give a fact or two with a partial certainty at least that the reader will give to the affairs of Bernard Shaw something of the same kind of significance which they have for Bernard Shaw himself. Thus, if I had simply said that Shaw was born in Dublin the average reader might exclaim, 'Ah yes--a wild Irishman, gay, emotional and untrustworthy.' The wrong note would be struck at the start. I have attempted to give some idea of what being born in Ireland meant to the man who was really born there. Now therefore for the first time I may be permitted to confess that Bernard Shaw was, like other men, born. He was born in Dublin on the 26th of July, 1856.¹⁴

Just as his birth can only be appreciated through some vision of Ireland, so his family can only be appreciated by some realization of the Puritan. He was the youngest son of one George Carr Shaw, who had been a civil servant and was afterwards a somewhat unsuccessful business man. If Chesterton had merely said that Shaw's family was Protestant (which in Ireland means Puritan), it might have been passed over as a quite

¹⁴ Gilbert K. Chesterton, *George B. Shaw* (London: Gutenberg eBook Produced by signal Alon, Martin Petit and online Distributed Proofreading team), <http://www.pgdp.net>.

colorless detail. However if the reader keeps in mind what has been said about the degeneration of Calvinism into a few clumsy vetoes, he will see in its full and frightful significance such a sentence as this, which comes from Shaw himself: "My father was in theory a vehement teetotaler but, in practice often a furtive drinker."¹⁵ The two things, of course, rest upon exactly the same philosophy: the philosophy of the taboo. There is a mystical substance, and it can give monstrous pleasures or call down monstrous punishments. Shaw's Puritanism is agreeably laughable. Shaw was educated at both Catholic and Protestant schools and he made fun equally of both sets of religious morals.¹⁶

The dipsomaniac and the abstainer are not only both mistaken, but they both make the same mistake: "They both regard alcohol as a drug and not as a drink,"¹⁷ said Chesterton. "But if I had mentioned that fragment of family information without any ethical preface, people would have begun at once to talk nonsense about artistic heredity and Celtic weakness, and would have gained the general impression that Bernard Shaw was an Irish wastrel and the child of Irish wastrels."¹⁸ Chesterton satirizes Shaw's father's prior condition to belittle his Puritanism. Whereas it is the whole point of the matter that Bernard Shaw comes from a Puritan middle-class family of the most solid respectability; and the only admission of error arises from the fact that one member of

¹⁵ Bridget Haggerty, In tribute to George B. Shaw: Atlantic Brief Lives, Dictionary of Quotations. *The Concise Columbia Encyclopedia*, Oct. 2006, 07: 08: 43.

¹⁶ A. M. Gibbs, *Bernard Shaw: A Life* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2005), 554.

¹⁷ George B. Shaw, letter to Thomas Demetrius O'Bolger, August 7, 1919, *George B. Shaw: Anglo-Irish Playwright, Critic*, 89.

¹⁸ Gilbert K. Chesterton satirizes George B. Shaw's life and his father's.

that Puritan family took a particularly Puritan view of strong drink. That is, he regarded it generally as a poison and sometimes as a medicine, if only a mental medicine.

In other ways also it is necessary to insist not only on the fact of an extreme Protestantism, but on that of the Protestantism of a Garrison--a world where that religious force both grew and festered all the more for being at once isolated and protected. All the influences surrounding Bernard Shaw in boyhood were not only Puritan, but such that no non-Puritan force could possibly pierce or counteract. He belonged to that Irish group which, according to Catholicism, "has hardened its heart, which, according to Protestantism has hardened its head,"¹⁹ but which, as Chesterton fancies, has chiefly hardened its hide, and lost its sensibility to the contact with the things around it.²⁰ In reading about his youth, one forgets that it was spent on the island which is still one flame before the altar of St. Peter and St. Patrick. The whole thing might be happening in Wimbledon. Shaw went to the Wesleyan Connectional School. He went to hear Moody and Sankey. "I was," he writes,

Wholly unmoved by their eloquence; and felt bound to inform the public that I was, on the whole, an atheist. My letter was solemnly printed in *Public Opinion*, to the extreme horror of my numerous aunts and uncles. That is the philosophical atmosphere; those are the religious postulates. It could never cross the mind of a man of the Garrison that before becoming an atheist he might stroll into one of the churches of his own country, and learn something of the philosophy that had satisfied Dante and Bossuet, Pascal and Descartes. The Puritanism of Shaw lies in his orthodoxy to see as right something everybody sees as wrong by his power of reframing the context.²¹

¹⁹Gilbert K. Chesterton, *George Bernard Shaw* (N.Y.: John Lane Co., 1910), 51.

²⁰Gilbert K. Chesterton, *George Bernard Shaw* (London: Gutenberg eBook Produced by signal Alon, Martin Petit and online distruted Proofreading Team), 42.

²¹*Ibid.*, 57.

The second attribute is illustrated in *The Profession of Mrs. Warren*, where Shaw sees a theory of geographical and timing relativity of human morality. Across the English Channel in France, Guy de Maupassant and the French see Mrs. Warren's story otherwise.²²

To that effect Chesterton wrote:

The Progressive Bernard Shaw happened to be born in an epoch, or rather at the end of an epoch, which was in its way unique in the ages of history. The nineteenth century was not unique in the success or rapidity of its reforms or in their ultimate cessation; but it was unique in the peculiar character of the failure which followed the success. The *French Revolution* was an enormous act of human realization; it has altered the terms of every law and the shape of every town in Europe; but it was by no means the only example of a strong and swift period of reform. What was really peculiar about the Republican's energy was this, that it left behind it, not an ordinary reaction but a kind of dreary, drawn out and utterly unmeaning hope. The strong and evident idea of reform sank lower and lower, until it became the timid and feeble idea of progress. Towards the end of the nineteenth century there appeared its two incredible figures; they were the pure Conservative and the pure Progressive; two figures which would have been overwhelmed with laughter by any other intellectual commonwealth of history. There was hardly a human generation which could not have seen the folly of merely going forward or merely standing still; of mere progressing or mere conserving.²³

In the coarsest Greek Comedy we might have a joke about a man who wanted to keep what he had, whether it was yellow gold or yellow fever, said Chesterton. In the dullest medieval morality we might have a joke about a progressive gentleman who, having passed heaven and come to purgatory, decided to go further and fare worse. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries were an age of quite impetuous progress; men made in one rush, roads, trades, synthetic philosophies, parliament, university settlements, laws, that could cover the world and such spires as had never struck the sky. But they would not have said that they wanted progress, but that they wanted the road, the parliaments, and the spires. In the same way the time from Richelieu to the Revolution was upon the whole a time of conservation, often of harsh and hideous conservation; it preserved tortures, legal quibbles, and despotism. But if you had asked the rulers they would not have said that they wanted conservation; but that they wanted the torture and the despotism. The old reformers and the old despots alike desired definite 'things,' powers, licenses, payments,

²² Mrs. Warren was portrayed in the novel of Guy De Maupassant as *une fille de joie*.

²³ Chesterton is downplaying the merit of Shaw's success, 42.

vetoed, and permissions. Only the modern progressive and the modern conservative have been content with two words.²⁴

Chesterton's motives were to discredit the originality of Shaw's discourse; while using the arguments rooted in Shaw's life, he projected on Shaw a judgment with the high-mindedness of Victorian culture.

This quite vague and varied discontent probably did lead to the revelation of many incidental wrongs and to much humane hard work in certain holes and corners. It also gave birth to a great deal of quite futile and frantic speculation, which seemed destined to take away babies from women, or to give votes to tom-cats. But it had an evil in it much deeper and more psychologically poisonous than any superficial absurdities. There was in this thirst to be 'progressive' a subtle sort of double-mindedness and falsity. A man was so eager to be in advance of his age that he pretended to be in advance of himself. Institutions that his wholesome nature and habit fully accepted he had to sneer at as old-fashioned, out of a servile and snobbish fear of the future. Out of the primal forests, through all the real progress of history, man had picked his way obeying his human instinct, or (in the excellent phrase) following his nose. But now he was trying, by violent athletic exertions, to get in front of his nose.²⁵

Chesterton's perspective is that, Shaw came in timely manner: the stage had been morose by standards of discontents who were demanding silently social changes, without the historical lesson Shaw taught in *Saint Joan*.

The third attribute is the most compelling that laid down the reason for Shaw's aggression toward Victorian culture. This motive is the most valid attribute that justifies that an oppressor never acknowledges while analyzing the condition of the oppressed. Being an Irishman carries some connotations that cannot be taken away from a playwright like Shaw in his mission to fracture the canon.

²⁴ Chesterton, 53.

²⁵ Ibid., 63.

Chesterton said Shaw was Irish. Being an Irishman in British culture is not respectable from an historical point of view. With an argument such as this setting the tone of the following argument, he elaborated on the feeling of his countrymen:

The English public has commonly professed, with a kind of pride, that it cannot understand Mr. Bernard Shaw. There are many reasons for it which ought to be adequately considered in such a book as this. But the first and most obvious reason is the mere statement that George Bernard Shaw was born in Dublin in 1856. At least one reason why Englishmen cannot understand Mr. Shaw is that Englishmen have never taken the trouble to understand Irishmen. They will sometimes be generous to Ireland; but never just to Ireland. They will speak to Ireland; they will speak for Ireland; but they will not hear Ireland speak. All the real amiability which most Englishmen undoubtedly feel towards Irishmen is lavished upon a class of Irishmen which unfortunately does not exist. The Irishman of the English farce, with his brogue, his buoyancy, and his tender-hearted irresponsibility, is a man who ought to have been thoroughly pampered with praise and sympathy, if he had only existed to receive them. Unfortunately, all the time that we were creating a comic Irishman in fiction, we were creating a tragic Irishman in fact. Never perhaps has there been a situation of such excruciating cross-purposes even in the three-act farce. The more we saw in the Irishman a sort of warm and weak fidelity, the more he regarded us with a sort of icy anger. The more the oppressor looked down with an amiable pity, the more did the oppressed look down with a somewhat unamiable contempt. But, indeed, it is needless to say that such comic cross-purposes could be put into a play; they have been put into a play. They have been put into what is perhaps the most real of Mr. Bernard Shaw's plays, *John Bull's Other Island*.

It is somewhat absurd to imagine that anyone who has not read a play by Mr. Shaw will be reading a book about him. But if it comes to that it is (as I clearly perceive) absurd to be writing a book about Mr. Bernard Shaw at all. It is indefensibly foolish to attempt to explain a man whose whole object through life has been to explain himself. But even in nonsense there is a need for logic and consistency; therefore let us proceed on the assumption that when I say that all Mr. Shaw's blood and origin may be found in *John Bull's Other Island*, some reader may answer that he does not know the play. Besides, it is more important to put the reader right about England and Ireland even than to put him right about Shaw. If he reminds me that this is a book about Shaw, I can only assure him that I will reasonably, and at proper intervals, remember the fact.²⁶

There is a condescending behavior the writer cannot help noticing from Chesterton's part, which is a *tour de force*. Shaw is an Irishman (Ireland is a colony of the King of

²⁶ Ibid., 19.

Great Britain); Chesterton is an Englishman (colonialist). The report cannot be equal when it comes to legitimacy of defense of the heir of Victorian culture. However, on the other hand Chesterton is right. Historically, the English, contrary to the French are tolerant when dealing with difference of origin and accent but that does not mean they are accepted. Chesterton cannot understand the drive of Shaw to be so critical of Victorian culture, which culture adopts him and gives him the level of recognition of Shakespeare's success in the literary world. In the mind of the colonialist everything from his culture is good for everybody so it cannot be rejected; the contrary feeling is an outcry of ungratefulness. Chesterton's problem with Shaw is that Chesterton understands Shaw in terms of his own culture (Victorian Culture), which is the colonialist's and oppressor of the Irishman's bullness.²⁷

Lastly, there is one general truth about Ireland which may very well have influenced George Bernard Shaw from the first; and almost certainly influenced him for good. Ireland is a country in which the political conflicts are at least genuine; they are about something. They are about patriotism, about religion, or about money: the three great realities. In other words, they are concerned with what commonwealth a man lives in or with what universe a man lives in or with how he is to manage to live in either. But they are not concerned with which of two wealthy cousins in the same governing class shall be allowed to bring in the same Parish Councils Bill; there is no party system in Ireland.²⁸ Shaw was born outside all this; and he carries that freedom upon his face. Whether what he heard in boyhood was violent Nationalism or virulent Unionism, it was at least

²⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, Joan Stambaugh, trans. (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 75.

²⁸ The countries of the UK (11 November 2005), 50.

something which wanted a certain principle to be in force, not a certain clique to be in office. Of him the great Gilbertian generalisation is untrue; he was not born either a little Liberal or else a little Conservative. He did not, like most of us, pass through the stage of being a good party man on his way to the difficult business of being a good man. He came to stare at our general elections as a Red Indian might stare at the Oxford and Cambridge boat-race, blind to all its irrelevant sentimentalities and to some of its legitimate sentiments. Shaw entered England as an alien, as an invader, as a conqueror. In other words, he entered England as an Irishman.²⁹

Shaw was foremost a man, rebellious against English structure and her superstructure, the system of education. He educated himself to make a place for himself in British society. His earlier failure as novelist encouraged him to listen to a friend who advised him to be a drama writer. The only way he knew to break his way into drama was to tell his story and paint as he felt it.³⁰

Why was André Obey attracted to Joan of Arc? As suggested by the reading committee of this work, a playwright is like an artist who is holding a piece of clay in his hands. When asked at first what he intends to do with it, he would not know his intention in shaping the piece of clay, but as he goes on shaping and reshaping the piece of clay, the three elements: artist, piece of clay and ethics merge the piece of clay into a finished product. This fable sums the existence of *La Fenêtre* by Obey, who explains:

Il m'est, je vous l'avoue, assez difficile de retrouver les mobiles d'une création artistique déjà lointaine. Tout ce que je peux vous dire, c'est que c'est l'intérêt technique de la construction qui a déclenché mon imagination. Il me fallait porter au

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Shaw was angered by what he perceives as the exploitation of working class: Social justice, education, marriage, religion, government, health care and class privilege.

théâtre cette construction particulière, un sujet simple et peu de personnages. L'éternel 'triangle' dont on reprochait au théâtre français l'emploi et même l'abus, m'a paru convenir par sa simplicité et sa généralité.³¹

Obey's plays have the characteristic of his belief, tolerance, miracle or reconciliation which can be the manifestation of an invisible hand sometimes such as in *La Souriante Madame Beudet*, a work written in collaboration with Denys Amiel. Its initial situation is the incompatibility of Paul and Madeleine Beudet, resulting from their different backgrounds, interests, and social levels. Madeleine, shocked by her discovery that she is growing old without having enjoyed life, decides to kill Paul to gain her freedom, since he refuses to discuss even the possibility of their divorce or separation. Well acquainted with Paul's odd habit of 'firing' an unloaded revolver at his head, Madeleine secretly loads the pistol and waits. A visit from one of her friends causes her to reconsider her crime plan, but before she can unload the gun, Paul gets it and the gun fires while aimed at her. Although she is unharmed, she is forced to recognize the extent of Paul's goodness when he interprets the near tragedy as Madeleine's desire to be killed rather than as her plan to murder him. The invisible hands are prevalent in Obey's plays mostly in the biblical reenactment where the plots take favorable course to the character who is being tested in spite of the circumstances.

With *La Carcasse*, also written in collaboration with Amiel, is the manifestation of *un cas de force majeure*. Edouard Vernon, a simple retired general, seems to have as his goal the avoidance of crisis or tension. The play begins at the moment when Albeyrac, a friend of the general (and former lover of the general's wife Fernande), extends to the couple an invitation to join him in Paris. Preferring to continue his comfortable and

³¹ Earle D. Clowney, *The Plays of André Obey: An Analytical Study* (Diss. University of Missouri, 1968), 30.

relatively respectable existence in the province to social anonymity in Paris, the general closes his eyes to his wife's promiscuity and refuses Albeyrac's invitation until the disgrace of his son's suicide forces his decision to leave the province.³²

First of all there is a problem of determining the protagonist. All the action concerns the general, but he is so passive that he makes a weak protagonist. By the same token, the friend Albeyrac is not directly involved in the action, but he has more responsibilities than either the general or Fernande.³³

There is very little that predisposes Obey to develop a suitable plot to the life and trial of Jeanne d'Arc--after seeing on stage *Saint Joan* of George B. Shaw. Nevertheless upon his own recognition Obey comes to develop *La Fenêtre* knowing that his reconciliatory plot approach of the play could raise curiosity. Obey wrote *La Fenêtre* in a one-hour setting, because he has a neoclassic heart and ethics. As Shaw swung a lot of blame while raising social issues, which by 1959 were unheard of, that appealed to Obey, the latter plotted a play with a peaceful theme. Written allegorically, *La Fenêtre* carries a lesson of peace to appease all the divisive reasons for the death of Jeanne. *La Fenêtre* is artistically well written in the sense that the reader feels the tragedy through the eyes of the others members of the Thibaut family. Obey is less realistic in *La Fenêtre* when it comes to the patriotism and the attitude of the French toward the English. Shaw's theory stands for reason; she was victim of a male conspiracy. As Obey did, in *La Bataille de la Marne*, to alleviate the shame of France for losing the battle against Germany, the course of the war is changed by the allied aid with no character—even personified France—who merits the name of protagonist. George Pillement concurred with Clowney's belief that too much is lost by Obey's attempt to achieve a work without a major character that

³²Ibid., 30-31.

³³ Ibid.

stands out: “sans personnages caractérisés et sans localisation.”³⁴ Obey overlooked too many social concerns that could be raised or explained if the writing of *La Fenêtre* did succeed the staging in Paris of *Saint Joan*. Obey purposely chose not to betray what has been the shortcoming of the French--the rationalist analysis of Joan of Arc's story. Obey remains loyal to France and his conviction of tolerance.³⁵ Obey's social position in most of his plays and in *La Fenêtre* is without doubt a representation of his vision of life. He seemed pessimistic because the nature of the subjects he was confronted with in his quest of peace for France has remained memorable. Clowney said:

If the efforts of these characters present a view of Obey's concept of life, the results show man's inability to create great changes in the existing order basically because they are opposed by those in power. Since changes, when present, are very slight, perhaps Obey is saying that change—no matter how insignificant—is still worth the effort. From a less optimistic point of view, he may be suggesting simply that we should accept those conditions which we cannot change and spare ourselves the anguish surrounding our futile efforts.³⁶

Obey emerges in *La Fenêtre* with the ambition of a great unifier with two incompatible attributes: nationalist and humanist. As demonstrated in *La Fenêtre* these two attributes socially do not foster the goal of peace for which Obey is known. Presented in allegory, *La Fenêtre* displays a subjugated anger and powerless Thibaut family by the execution of Joan of Arc. At first the martyrdom of Joan of Arc should be a reason to unify the Frenchmen against the British, but Obey sees it otherwise (as an opportunity to forgive the ugly crime of burning Joan of Arc at the stake), in order to fulfill his goal of peacemaker. Intellectually, there is a historical flaw on one hand. That

³⁴ Ibid., 33.

³⁵ *Saint Joan* precedes *La Fenêtre*, forcing Obey not to repeat the shameful experience of the execution of Joan of Arc on French soil and under the silent regard of French people.

³⁶ Clowney, 70

would have been a spiritual second victory of English pragmatism over French rationalism and on the other hand, that would have set fire to French national pride and, at the same time, to Obey's reputation as a pacifist.

The theatrical attraction of Obey to Joan of Arc was without doubt, but he acts under the impulse of seeing Shaw's *Saint Joan* staged to add new ideas not to upset the fragile ego of the French. Politically, *La Fenêtre* was not well thought of, given the social turmoil and crisis of confidence in French leadership France was experiencing in 1959. The old man Thibaut, one of the principal characters of *La Fenêtre*, displays nationalistic feelings and exhorts Frenchmen not to forgive the British offense to their national pride. Did Obey the pacifist crack under the social pressure? Or did the interdisciplinary approach (that broadens the scope) of Shaw in *Saint Joan* give him some new considerations? Before accusing the social mindlessness of Obey, let us analyze his style.

Obey's style, wrote Clowney:

We notice it is marked by versatility and originality. His language is, for the most part, adequate for his characters, revealing a poetic quality that shows not only skillful use of repetition but also a melodic handling of proper names. His favorite symbols seem to be those of nature, where he finds good and evil repercussions from the same natural phenomenon. He shows a preference for the name "Marie," exploring the many images and symbols it calls to mind. Also, with his keen appreciation for the work of others, he is able to give his dramatic insight to artful translations, worthy of the original versions.

He shows his ingenuity in the use of irony in most of his works, but he excels at it in *Revenu de l'Etoile* by capitalizing on the "reversal-of-time" technique. Obey sees the play as the inheritance of an ancient tradition—a form whose unchanging laws require a harmonious marriage between scenery and scenes, actors and gestures, dialogue and silence. Perhaps Obey himself best describes his style when he writes that he tries never to duplicate what he has written—a severe code to follow for a prolific writer like Obey, but one which reflects the richness of his mind.

In his plays, many of which were written under the watchful eyes of his mentor Jacques Copeau, Obey explores themes showing man's desire to change his condition in life, or his effort to maintain a certain condition, or his rejection of life altogether. Most of the author's efforts to change his condition, an indication of the author's optimism. Significant also is the fact that Obey has written fewer works where the protagonist tries to maintain the *status quo*, and these plays (only four) belong to his early writings and may have been experimental works.

Somewhat closely related to Obey's themes are various attitudes which permeate his works. The most obvious of these are his constant appeal for peace and his complete hatred of war, stemming from his painful first-hand experience as infantryman in World War I. Obey tends to find the best example for his dramatic themes in exceptional characters—Lucrece, Noe, don Juan, Venus—although on occasion he glorifies the more humble segment of the society—Old Thibaut, Marie, Bradshaw and Greene. He shows a preference for symbolical characters also, since he adds such figures to the works prompting his adaptations. All his characters are really people, and therefore identification with them is relatively easy, but perhaps his secondary characters have a special advantage, being modeled after people Obey has known in Douai, Touraine and the Loire Valley. He has written at least four works in which he gives significant value to a character, the most effective being his unusual treatment of the martyrdom of Jeanne d'Arc.³⁷

Obey should be categorized as an idealist, for he tends to envisage a world free from war, strife, and malice. At the same time, he recognizes life as being so complex that it works against itself. This feeling finds expression in the pessimism peculiar to his early plays. It is obvious that there is a lack of convictions and clear-cut goals in Obey's characters such as Shaw's and Anouilh's characters. Again, Clowney might see in the craftsman Obey another technique to display his talent. Or his upbringing as religious and obedient topped by his style of symbolist forces him to leave the reader to conclude his plots. This lack of resolute conviction in a work such as *La Fenêtre* is not a flaw in his plays but a nonimaginative reader who is seeking an all-ready conclusion to feed his argumentative purpose in an academic setting. Obey did not want to make immediate impact on the readers or theatergoers.

³⁷ Clowney, 199-203.

La Fenêtre is relevant to two philosophies that made a great impact on Obey's literary works: religious philosophy and Socratic methods of reasoning. The aim of Socratic philosophy was to unify Athenians and their leaders. Socrates suspected the leaders of Athens of committing empathy, but on the other hand he advised the people not to do wrong to those who have done wrong to them. The humanist interpretation of the plot of *La Fenêtre* can also be related to the famous line of the bible that says: love thy neighbor as thyself. Knowing Obey's passion for staging biblical characters and adaptation to the stage as witness of Obey's faith, compels one to conclude that *La Fenêtre* is an indirect acceptance of Joan of Arc as the sacrificial lamb in *La Fenêtre*.

Why was Anouilh attracted to Jeanne d'Arc? *Saint Joan's* publication and success influenced *L'Alouette*, the third play to be analyzed. *L'Alouette* is by far the best reenactment of Joan of Arc's life by a French playwright. After Shaw's *Saint Joan*, the story and trial of Joan of Arc cease to be an embarrassment to Frenchmen. Voltaire and Anatole France are two giants of French literature who shamed their country by using a rational approach to analyze Joan of Arc's life and trial. Anouilh takes that into account by breaking away from the melodrama of the trial and negation of the dominant and powerful superstructure factors in the 15th century. Anouilh infuses in *L'Alouette* a new and personal approach to validate his national and political concerns about the ideal leaders for the future of his beloved France.³⁸

To understand the origin of Anouilh's pessimistic plots in his plays, it is important to admit his impoverished childhood during the great depression. That experience had a strong impact on Anouilh's psyche, so it would be important to analyze the influence of

³⁸ *L'Alouette* is a forum of political discussion of the Vichy government.

that global phenomenon. Does Anouilh's past make him attracted to weak protagonists? Perhaps the answer may be found in psychoanalysis, a body of ideas developed by the Austrian physician Sigmund Freud and continued by others. It is primarily devoted to the study of human psychological functioning and behavior, although it can also be applied to societies. Psychoanalysis has three applications:

1. A method of investigation of the mind and the way one thinks;
2. A systematized set of theories about human behavior; and
3. A method of treatment of psychological or emotional illness.³⁹

Under the broad umbrella of what psychoanalysis is, we are going to investigate Anouilh's behavior with respect to the characters he created to estimate what drew Anouilh to Jeanne d'Arc. There are at least twenty-two theoretical orientations regarding the underlying theory of understanding human mutation and human development. The various approaches in treatment called "psychoanalytic" vary as much as the theories do. The term also refers to a method of studying child development, from which the analyst formulates the unconscious conflicts causing the patient's symptoms and character problems, and interprets them for the patient to create insight for resolution of the problems. To justify the conflicting situation between characters and the reality they live, Freud said: "I have made a world for myself, where everything is harder and purer."⁴⁰

The specifics of the analyst's interventions typically include confronting and clarifying the patient's pathological defenses, wishes and guilt. Through the analysis of

³⁹ Alba Della Fazio concurs in her critique of Jean Anouilh that Anouilh's pessimistic view in his plays is due to his impoverished childhood.

⁴⁰ Freudian psychoanalysis refers to a specific type of treatment in which the "analysand" (analytic patient) verbalizes thoughts, including free associations, fantasies, and dreams.

conflicts, including those contributing to resistance and those involving transference onto the analyst of distorted reactions, psychoanalytic treatment can clarify how patients unconsciously are their own worst enemies: how unconscious, symbolic reactions that have been stimulated by experience are causing symptoms. Alba Della Fazio, investigating the way Anouilh thinks in *The Life and Times of Jean Anouilh*, wrote:

Anouilh's reclusion is a flight from the world and also the search for what he has dramatized in so many of his plays: the understanding of one's inner self. The Archbishop's description of Becket fits Anouilh: 'His is a strange, unseizable soul. I have often observed him, in the midst of pleasures and noise. He is as though absent. He is looking for himself.' He refuses to don the masks that society imposes on us, and is avoiding the dichotomy, described by one of his heroines, between the public and private personality: 'You are a loyal man, but you have two or three personalities and you get confused sometimes.'⁴¹

Fazio explains Anouilh's behavior as:

Despairing of ever reconciling human aspirations and the possibility of their realization, Anouilh lives a life that emphasizes man's inner isolation. False personality and the relationships that society forces upon us cannot conceal man's basic isolation. To our social contacts, others bring their false personality, Anouilh feels free to reject other people's values and follow his own inner convictions—a choice which has resulted in a code of convictions that has marked him as antisocial, amoral, and negativistic.⁴²

Although Anouilh was driven to solitude during the war and after the liberation, he was nevertheless concerned enough about his art to appear faithfully at rehearsals of his plays in the Paris theaters, much like *La Répétition*, the play in which the characters are rehearsing a Marivaux drama under the relentless eye of the ubiquitous Count. Anouilh's presence at the rehearsals was not always relished, as witnessed by the resignation of four of the Théâtre de l'Atelier's cast during rehearsals of *Colombe*, and Jean-Louis Barrault's and Madeleine Renaud's suffering throughout Anouilh's cruel and nerve-wracking expression of boredom with the Barrault version of *La Répétition*. It is because the sequestered, eremitic Anouilh lives vicariously through his characters and because he himself is such an extraordinary actor that he is so demanding of those who perform in his plays; more recently, however, his criticisms have mellowed and Parisian actors find him more

⁴¹ Alba Della Fazio, *Jean Anouilh* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1963), 24.

⁴² Ibid.

congenial, thus fostering a harmonious relationship between the players and Anouilh in his role, that of stage director.⁴³

Faithful to the French rationalist philosophy, Anouilh took into account the old negativities of his French predecessors to reinvent Joan of Arc as national heroine. That is more likely a recognition of what the literary world has learned from *Saint Joan*. Anouilh was the first Frenchman who filled the void of historical hero unanimously approved by all of the French, because Frenchmen relish the nostalgia to re-enact ilost wars in literature: Such as 'les Gaulois versus les Romains;' *La Bataille de la Marne* in Obey.

The unique power of *L'Alouette* arises from its stress on factors which would seem to conflict with the legend of a saint. The myth, far from being destroyed, is tested, and as it ultimately triumphs it emerges with a new energy and strength, having been rendered both credible and poignant on grounds which appeal to the modern imagination. Anouilh's undertaking combining the immediacy of drama with a sensitive view of national politics and a broad philosophical perspective of history, is an heroic attempt at heroic totality.

Thus, the attraction to diverse aspects of Joan of Arc's life, history, and trial cannot be denied. For Shaw, with his predisposition and his background that G. K. Chesterton reveals, there cannot be a better opportunity than the treatment of Joan of Arc's trial and death to unleash Shaw's frustration as *Irishman, Progressive and Puritan* on the culture that generates the condition he endured during his life time.

Obey, influenced by the presentation of Shaw's *Saint Joan*, elaborates a peaceful resolution of the martyrdom of Joan for the sake of peace for his beloved France. *La*

⁴³ Ibid., 26.

Fenêtre is less entertaining with a nationalist theme. *La Fenêtre* leaves the reader unsatisfied after the different social themes Shaw brought up to elucidate his approach to Joan of Arc's life and trial.

Anouilh's being a victim of childish anguish projects on Joan of Arc the emotional fragility and the unsettleness of French politics after World War II. He sets a virtual tribunal where the protagonists are defending the political factions in France during that time period--more division than unity.

As it might seem, Joan of Arc's martyrdom has remained attractive to many writers for expressing their social concerns. The study of some of George B. Shaw's works in the next chapter will shed light on our findings.

CHAPTER 3

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW AND SAINT JOAN

George Bernard Shaw was born the son of an unsuccessful Protestant merchant in Dublin, Ireland, on July 26, 1856. Though his childhood was marked by neglect, due to his father's alcoholism, Shaw's mother supported him in his writing career. Shaw was the only son and third and youngest child of George Carr and Lucinda Elizabeth Gurly Shaw. Though descended from landed Irish gentry, Shaw's father was unable to sustain his family.

Shaw's formal education consisted of being tutored by an uncle and briefly attending Protestant and Catholic day schools. At fifteen, he began to work as a bookkeeper in a landlord's office, which job required him to go to the slums to collect the rent. Thus, he received first-hand experience of the economic hardships of his countrymen and of injustice. After work, he lost himself in books, theater, and art, but it was music that pervaded his home. His mother took singing lessons from a well-reputed Dublin music teacher, who eventually moved into the Shaw's household. When the teacher moved to London, Shaw's mother and his two sisters followed. Shaw joined them the following year at the age of twenty hoping to make a living by writing. William Archer, a prominent journalist and drama critic, urged Shaw to write plays. With his long background in economics and politics, Shaw, through his socialist viewpoint, gave real purpose to his writing with a sense of hope for human improvement. His political

feelings encouraged him to confound the Fabian Society in 1884. By 1895 Shaw was writing regularly as drama critic for a well-known weekly newspaper. After the turn of the century, Shaw's plays gradually began to achieve production and, eventually, acceptance in England.

In 1880 England ruled the world, and Victorian culture ruled England. One of the most important beliefs was the presuppositions of number six Ivy Road.¹ The presuppositions of Ivy Road were the subconscious assumptions of the elite intellectuals in the late nineteenth century:

1- The British Empire is stable and will continue for many years to come.

2- Material Progress (increased capital outcome per worker) will continue without ceasing.

3- The British government will always be in the hands of the intellectual aristocracy using the method of persuasion.

The appreciation of the premises of these presuppositions is to understand the foundation of Shaw's motivation.

As Langston Hughes indicated, a writer does not arbitrarily choose the subject of his writing. The choice is dictated to him by his experience and beliefs that drive him to articulate a subject better than others.² George Bernard Shaw put his experience to use in his plays. Shaw set out to break the monotony of the theater of the Victorian era. He described the way he felt about British society; he expressed his feelings in a

¹ The presuppositions of number Six Ivy road were subconscious assumptions of a group of Cambridge intellectuals led by John Maynard Keynes.

² Milton Meltzer, *Langston Hughes- A Biography* (New York: Millbrook Press, 1968), ix.

nonconformist way, rebelling against English establishment and its super-structure, such as the formal education system.³

His first years in London, 1876-1884, were filled with frustration and poverty. Depending on his mother's income as a music teacher and a pound a week sent by his father from Dublin, Shaw spent his days in the British Museum reading room writing novels and reading, and his evenings attending lectures and debates by the middle-class intelligentsia. He became a vegetarian, socialist, skillful speaker, and a budding playwright. In addition, he became a driving force behind the Fabian Society and threw himself into committee work, wrote socialist pamphlets, and spoke to the crowds several times a week. Shaw began his journalistic career as a book reviewer and art, music, and drama critic, always downgrading the artificialities and hypocrisies he found in those arts.

Just as the historian can teach no real history until he has cured his readers of the romantic delusion that the greatness of a queen consists in her being a pretty woman and having her head cut off, so the playwright of the first order can do nothing with his audience until he has cured them of looking at the stage through the keyhole, and sniffing round the theater as prurient people sniff round the divorce court.⁴

Shaw stayed a boarder in his mother's home until 1889. He left only when, at the age of forty-two, he married Irish heiress and fellow Fabian Charlotte Payne-Townsend. The marriage lasted until her death in 1943. Though Shaw had experimented with drama from his early twenties- he did not see a play of his staged until 1892. He exploited his experiences as rent collector in a landlord's office with *Widower's Houses*, a dramatized socialist tract on the slumlord. His plays were often comical as well, because they were

³ George B. Shaw (1856-1950), Anglo-Irish playwright, critic. Letter, August 7, 1919 to Thomas Demetruis O'Bolger. *Sixteen Self Sketches: Biographers' Blunders corrected*, Constable and Co., London (1949), 89-90.

⁴ Eugene Brieux, *Three Plays by Brieux*, Intro. by Shaw (Cambridge: Kissinger Publishing, 2005), 147.

entertaining serious themes in juxtaposition with a comic plot. In almost everything he wrote, Shaw saw his mission as that of a reformer and felt that people should be able to hear important ideas discussed in the theater.⁵

Shaw prefaced his plays with introductory essays dealing not only with the plays and the plays' themes that he was inspired to convey but those suggested by his experience; these introductory essays became well known on their own. A Shaw innovation was to write stage directions and description in narrative style in the text rather than the usual directorial form. Before a cast was selected for his plays, he would invite potential actors to come for readings and would read the play in its entirety to them, acting out the parts exactly as he meant them to be performed. He also attended rehearsals where he gave helpful advice to actors having difficulty with a role.⁶

In addition to his plays, which he continued to write into his nineties, Shaw wrote numerous essays on literary, economic, political and social topics, as well as essays, introductions, and reviews of novelists and poets, and was a prolific letter writer. He continued to be controversial when he spoke out on various issues, as he was inclined to tell the truth as he saw it and could be ruthlessly honest. Shaw received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1925 after the success of his play *Saint Joan*, and an Academy Award for best Screenplay for *Pygmalion* (1938), later made into the musical *My Fair Lady* (1956). Shaw died on November 2, 1950.⁷

⁵ Brooke Allen, *The Life of George Bernard Shaw* Vol. XIV (The New Criterion, 1993), 64.
<http://www.newcriterion.com:81/archive/12/sep93/shaw.htm>.

⁶ Stanley Weintraub, *The Unexpected Shaw: Biographical Approaches to Shaw and His Works* (N.Y.: Ungar, 1982), 9.

⁷ Michael Holroyd, *Bernard Shaw- The One Volume* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1997), 311.

Shaw the Humanist

In 1914, amid the disturbances in Europe that ultimately produced World War I, Shaw's interest in educating to prevent the tragic devastation of human life due to war was demonstrated in *Pygmalion*. Great Britain was still a colonial power with colonies in the Pacific, Atlantic, Africa and the Caribbean. Queen Victoria characterized the times with a set of values called Victorianisms, which revolve around "high social-mindedness, domesticity, a confidence in the expansion of knowledge, and the power of reasoned argument to change society."⁸

Industrialization brought a demographic shift, causing many more unskilled laborers to seek work in the city. Such was the nature of the Doolittles in *Pygmalion*. Gradually, during the nineteenth century, there was a relaxing of the traditional property requirements to allow many more Englishmen to vote. This development also brought the introduction of woman's suffragette organizations:

Increased political participation further prompted a shift in sex roles: British society had already noted the phenomenon of the new woman, and was to see further changes such as increasing numbers of women in the work force, as well as reforms to divorce laws and other impacts upon domestic life.⁹

In the midst of that social turmoil, *Pygmalion* was written, and it took into account some of the social problems of that era. The Catholic Church redeemed herself for the wrongful judgment and burning at the stake of the French heroine, Joan of Arc, and canonized her in 1920. That event reawakened within Shaw the interest to write about

⁸ Rhoda Hellman, *Henry George and George B. Shaw's conversation to Socialism* (N.Y.: Henry George School of Social Science, 1965), N/A.

⁹ *Pygmalion* reflects Shaw's interest as an activist in the welfare of the poor, among many others), British women over thirty won the right to vote in United Kingdom.
<http://search.barnesandnoble.com/.../George-Bernard>.

Joan of Arc and in 1923, Shaw published *Saint Joan*, the life story and trial of Joan of Arc. The play was performed; the maid was treated not only as a Catholic saint and martyr but as a combination of practical mystic, heretical saint, and inspired genius.

Saint Joan as a superior being:

crushed between those mighty forces, the Church and Law, is the personification of the tragic heroine; her death embodies the paradox that mankind fears--and often kills--its saints and heroes and will go on doing so until the very higher moral qualities it fears become the general condition of man through a process of evolutionary change. Acclaim for *Saint Joan* led to the awarding of the 1925 Nobel Prize for Literature to Shaw.¹⁰

“*Saint Joan* was intriguing in more than one way”¹¹ said Shaw. Technically, Shaw belonged to the Protestant “ascendancy”--the land Irish gentry--but his impractical father was first a sinecure civil servant and then an unsuccessful grain merchant, Shaw grew up in an atmosphere of genteel poverty, which to him was more humiliating than being merely poor. Later on, defending Joan’s vision, he said:

I cannot believe, nor, if I could, could I expect all my readers to believe, as Joan did, that three ocular visible well dressed persons, named respectively Saint Catherine, Saint Margaret, and Saint Michael, came down from heaven and gave her certain instructions with which they were charged by God for her. Not that such a belief would be more improbable or fantastic than some modern beliefs which we all swallow; but there are fashions and family habits in belief, and it happens that, my fashion being Victorian and my family habit Protestant, I find myself unable to attach any such objective validity to the form of Joan’s visions.¹²

According to the critics:

Early Victorian drama was a popular art form, appealing to an uneducated audience that demanded emotional excitement rather than intellectual subtlety. Vivacious melodramas did not, however, hold exclusive possession of the stage. The mid-century saw lively comedies by Dion Boucicault and Tom Taylor. In the 1860s,

¹⁰ Michael Holroyd, *Tragedy without Villains*. The Guardian. Retrieved 2009-01-18.

¹¹ George Bernard Shaw, *Saint Joan-Tragedy Not Melodrama* (N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1923), 10.

¹² George Bernard Shaw, *St. Joan-A Chronicle Play in Six Scenes and Epilogue* (London: Penguin Books, 1957), 10.

T.W. Robertson pioneered a new realist drama, an achievement later celebrated by Arthur Wing Pinero in his charming sentimental comedy *Trelawny of the Wells* (1898). The 1890s were, however, the outstanding decade of dramatic innovation. Oscar Wilde crowned his brief career as a playwright with one of the few great high comedies in English, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895). At the same time, the influence of the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen was helping to produce a new genre of serious 'problem plays,' such as Pinero's *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* (1893). 'J.T. Grein founded the Independent Theater in 1891 to foster such work and staged there the first plays of George Bernard Shaw and translation of Ibsen.'¹³

The humor in Shaw's writing was unmatched by any of his contemporaries except Oscar Wilde, who is remembered for his comedy. However, his wittiness should not obscure his important role in revolutionizing British drama:

In the Victorian Era, before Shaw's ascendancy, the London stage was regarded as a place for frothy, sentimental entertainment. Shaw made it a forum for considering moral, political and economic issues. While doing so, he acknowledged his indebtedness to Henrik Ibsen, who was the pioneer of modern realistic drama.¹⁴

As Shaw's experience and popularity increased, his plays became increasingly verbose, which did not detract from their success. These works, from what might be called the beginning of his "middle" period, include *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1898), *Man and Superman* (1903), *Major Barbara* (1905), and *The Doctor's Dilemma* (1906). From 1904 to 1907, several of Shaw's plays had their London premieres in notable productions at the Court Theater, managed by Harley Granville-Barker and J.E. Vedrenne. The first of his plays to be performed at the Court Theater, *John Bull's Other Island* (1904), is not especially popular today, but it made his reputation in London when, during a command performance, King Edward VII laughed so hard he broke his chair. Shaw's outlook was

¹³ Jack Thomas Grein, *Encyclopedia Britannica*. 2010. Encyclopedia online. 25 May, 2010-05-25. <http://www.britanica.com/EBchecked/topic/245737/Jack-Thomas-Grein>.

¹⁴ Claude Puzin, *Litterature du 19e siècle -Texte et documents* (Paris: Nathan, 1987), 7.

changed by World War I, which he vigorously opposed, despite incurring outrage from the public as well as from many friends. His first full-length piece presented after the war, written mostly during it, was *Heartbreak House* (1919). A new Shaw was emerging—the wit remained, but his faith in humanity had dwindled. In the preface of *Heartbreak House* he said:

It is said that every people has the government it deserves. It is more to the point that every Government has the electorate it deserves; for the orators of the front bench can edify or debauch an ignorant electorate at will. Thus our democracy moves in a vicious circle of reciprocal worthiness and unworthiness.¹⁵

Shaw had previously supported gradual change toward socialism, but now he arguably saw more hope by participating in government by being a strong man to voice the Fabian's concerns. This attitude would sometimes make him oblivious to the defects of dictators like Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini.¹⁶

Shaw, as member of the socialist discussion group with Sydney Webb, became the editor of *Fabian Essays* (1887). Shaw emphasized the importance of economics and class structure; for him, economics was “the basis of society.” In 1882 Shaw's conversion to socialism began when he heard Henry George, the American author of *Progress and Poverty*, address a London meeting. George's message “changed the whole current of my life.”¹⁷ His reading of Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* in the same year “made a man of me,”¹⁸ he said. For twenty-seven years Shaw served on the Fabian Society's executive committee. In his role as an active polemicist, he later published *Common*

¹⁵ George B. Shaw, *Heartbreak House* (London: Longmans Green and Co., Ltd., 1961), 12.

¹⁶ George B. Shaw admired the egalitarian spirit of Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini. Video www.youtube.com.

¹⁷ George Bernard Shaw, *Encyclopedia of World Biography*. 2004. Encyclopedia.com. 23 May. 2010 <http://www.encyclopedia.com>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Sense About the War on November 14, 1914, a criticism of the British government and its policies. *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Capitalism and Socialism* (1928) supplied a complete summary of his political position, which pamphlet remains a major volume of socialist commentary. For six years Shaw held office on a municipal level in a London suburb. His other career continued; between 1888 and 1894 he wrote for newspapers and periodicals as a highly successful music critic. At the end of this period, he began writing on a regular basis for Frank Harris's *Saturday Review*; as a critic, he introduced Ibsen and the "new" drama to the British public. Shaw's *Quintessence of Ibsenism* appeared in 1890, *The Sanity of Art* in 1895, and *The Perfect Wagnerite* in 1898. All of them indicate the formation of his esthetics.¹⁹

George Bernard Shaw's theater extended to his personal life. He considered himself a cultural miracle, and a partisan conflict among his readers and theatergoers provoked a massive body of literature for and against him and his work. Much recent criticism concludes that he ranks as the greatest English dramatist since William Shakespeare.²⁰

In summary, George Bernard Shaw's writings were out of his experience of life, said Michael Holroyd:

Shaw chose to impose on life the somewhat arbitrary choice since Shaw would as perhaps more profitably be observed within his sociological context rather than as eternal protagonist in the family drama it is true, however, that Shaw's characters were bizarre enough to warrant a psychological approach, and that roots of his eccentricities are traceable to his early life. Holroyd went further in his pursuit of enlightening us on George Bernard Shaw's life: In looking at life in its entirety.²¹

¹⁹ It enables an emergent bond between artist, audience and the work.

²⁰ *Saint Joan* (1924), his masterpiece, Shaw was again accepted by the post-war public. Now he was regarded as 'a second Shakespeare,' who had revolutionized the British theatre. [Creative Commons Nimeä-Epäkaupallinen-Ei muutettuja teoksia 1.0 Suomi \(Finland\) lisenssillä](#).

²¹ Michael Holroyd, *Bernard Shaw, Vol 1: The Search of Love 1856-1898* (London: Randon House, 1988), 152.

Holroyd chose a Freudian model that is summarized in the successive title of the first three volumes: *The Search for Love, The Pursuit of Power, The Lure of Fantasy*. In his early years, writes Holroyd:

Shaw had looked for love but rejecting this as impractical for himself. . . he then attempted to replace it, through imaginative word play, with the exercise of beneficent political power. But there too he had been disappointed, during the last period of his life looked for illumination elsewhere.²²

The Shaw had belonged to the Protestant upper class, but Bernard Shaw's branch of the family had grown embarrassingly *déclassé* by the time of his birth in 1856. Shaw's childhood was filled with bitterness, because his mother Lucinda E. Shaw treated her husband more and more as an inconvenient household pet. Shaw was emotionally neglected as a boy, the outcast among the children of the family. His mother lavished love on her daughters, Lucy and Agnes, but permanently hardened against her little son. "Fortunately, I have a heart of stone," Shaw wrote in 1939, "else my relations would have broken it long ago."²³ The heart of stone was a pose developed over decades to cope with paternal rejection, and the story of Shaw, as told by Holroyd, is in larger part a story of that developing pose. Whatever heights Shaw scaled, whatever adulation he received from the world, he was never able to squeeze a jot of approval from his own mother, nor did anyone, in his family attempt to stimulate intellectual or artistic pursuit in young Bernard or "Sonny," as he was called at home.²⁴

The researcher concludes with Brooke Allen, who said:

²² Holroyd, *The Search for Love, The Pursuit of Power, The Lure of Fantasy* Vol. 2 (1898-1898) *Craft on paper: The Craft of Biography and Autobiography* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1989), 130.

²³ Cara Feinberg, *The Exhibit, Mr. Shaw's Time* (Display in the Burns Library, March 31, 2005), N/A.

²⁴ Ibid.

Seldom can any author have taken Horace's dictum that the artist should delight and instruct as seriously as did Bernard Shaw. The notion of art for art's sake, the guiding principle for so many writers of his generation, repelled him, and he insisted that he would not lift a finger to produce a work of art if he thought there was nothing more than that in it.²⁵

All his plays, novels, and essays are intensely conceived political statements.

It is, of course, a paradox of Shavian dimension that these serious sociological tracts, in fact, delight even more than they instruct, that they continue to delight, indeed, in an age when the historical setting of Shaw's theories and political credenda has receded into the past. One by one the mainstays of Shaw's worldview--the Fabian creed of "permeation," eventually his Stalinism, his faith in "Creative Evolution" and the Life Force"--have been toppled; but the iconoclasm, the lacerating common sense, the passionate social conscience, and the insistence upon man's common responsibility for the state of his world live on because of the incomparable wit with which they are presented. "Why should laughter and humor be excommunicated?" Shaw once asked Tolstoy. "Suppose the World were only one of God's jokes; would you work any the less to make it a good joke instead of a bad one?"²⁶

Shaw's plays in general are witty and paradoxical discussions of ideas, in some ways just an extension of the political debates he liked to engage in as a member of the various debating societies to which he belonged. His common man's view, gives to his plays a great deal of interest and attention from the higher and lower members of the British society. He succeeds in his one-man mission against the whole establishment.

²⁵ Allen, *The Life of George Bernard Shaw*
<http://www.newcriterion.com:81/archive/12/sep93/shaw.htm>.

²⁶ Ibid.

Throughout his career, Shaw was known as an irreverent skeptic, and he was not a believer in any orthodox religion. However, influenced by the writing of the Norwegian Henrik Ibsen, he developed a theory of what he called the life force: an irrational force at work in the universe that guides social evolution by entering the consciousness of certain superior individuals. Despite his socialist views, Shaw was a great believer in the importance of superior individuals or geniuses and, especially, after experiencing the popular anti-German hysteria during World War I, had a low opinion of the common people and distrust of democracy. In fact, in later years, Shaw became quite sympathetic to dictatorial regimes, such as the Soviet Union and Mussolini's Italy.²⁷ Shaw was much opposed to war, and when World War I broke out, he published an antiwar pamphlet that caused him to be greatly criticized. He was also critical of English rule in Ireland, and spoke out against the execution of the leaders of the Irish uprising against the English in 1916. He also defended Roger Casement, an Irishman executed for treason that same year.²⁸

Shaw had been thinking of writing a play about Joan of Arc for many years and finally did so at the urging of his wife in 1923, three years after Joan was canonized as a saint. The play earned him enormous prestige and contributed to his being awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1925. It was also one of his last major works, though he lived for another twenty-seven years, dying at the age of 94 on November 2, 1950, in Ayot Saint Lawrence, Hertfordshire, England.²⁹

²⁷ Michael Murray's biography of Jacques Barzun. Paper to be published 2010. <http://www.bin.com/search> Shaw in twilight.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Cultural depiction of Joan of Arc-Wikipedia free encyclopedia. <http://wikipedia.org>.

Shaw's Philosophy

Plato said that humans' actions are philosophic at their core. Western philosophy has been a footnote of Plato since 365 B.C. To Shaw's philosophy into that perspective, Henderson Archibald said:

The importance of Shaw's contribution to the intellectual history of drama is too well known to need explanation or defense. The range and impact of his achievements place him without question in a short list of the Giants of English playwrights. To many generations Shaw is known as a playwright. They leave out of his biography what he loves the most is the title of philosopher.³⁰

Henderson, who devoted to Shaw's life and his works a book of more than 500 pages, concurred in chapters IX and X how philosophy was an intricate part of Shaw's works. The writer likes to shed light on Shaw's philosophy and the social concerns that influence him in *Saint Joan*. Being philosophical is being political. Socrates' life can exemplify that. Shaw takes on in his plays the political establishment of the Victorian belief system, by drawing attention to the way the leaders were thinking and seeing the rest of the world. Shaw, by origin is not part of the intellectual elite of the United Kingdom. He uses to his advantage his position of playwright by drawing attention to himself and to the social concerns he highlighted. His earlier writings are in large part influenced by his experiences.³¹

Shaw includes (his experience) in most of his writings the Fabian Society's philosophy and economic belief. Plays such as *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *Major Barbara*, *Pygmalion*, and *St. Joan* had an obvious plot but, the agenda the plays were carrying was hidden with subtleness because of the social class of the theatergoers. His

³⁰ Archibald Henderson, *George Bernard Shaw- His Life and Works: A Critical Biography* (Cincinnati: Stewart and Kidd Company, 1911), 468.

³¹ *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *Widower's House*, *Pygmalion*, *Major Barbara* are all about the ethical values dear to Shaw.

intentions were well concealed. For example, in his most celebrated play, *Pygmalion*, everybody saw a Cinderella story. *Pygmalion* was filled with political and subliminal messages of his suggested reform of English phonetics. *Major Barbara* was a criticism of social hypocrisy, and *Mrs. Warren's Profession* questioned the validity of the old societal value which condones prostitution. Shaw suggests that truth must be seen in the light of the new society in expansion, and re frames prostitution as people displaced and underpaid.

Yet, it can be claimed that the importance and influence of his plays do not constitute the *raison d'être* of this paper. Indeed, there are two point of view from which his influence can be debited to his account.

In the first place, Shaw's messages were not well articulated to be obvious as the comical and dramatic were to the theatergoers and readers. As a Fabian, his messages were available only to the intellectuals, not to the masses; the masses needed them the most.

Secondly, there were no inclusive action plans of the masses, as Karl Marx made it clear in his messages in the *Communist Manifesto*. Marx urges the proletariat class to take the initiative of the action, not the intellectuals, who are corrupted. The proletariat is the only class, Marx said, that could put an end to what he was denouncing in the Manifesto.³²

Shaw, as enlightened Fabian, knows rather well that the class he was entertaining would not relinquish their way of life so easily upon demand or upon criticism through a play, so he decided to use the process to his advantage by running for a democratic, elected office.

³² Marx/Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969), 98-137.

The reader may ask who were the Fabians? One can see from history and the makeup of the movement that the Fabians were intellectuals whose members received thirteen Nobel Prizes and academic laureates. The primary concern of the Fabians was to change the mind of the leading class about some of the prejudgments taxing the masses, such as exorbitant rent, arrogance, superiority, discrimination.

However, Shaw's writing brought him many credits, among which he gained fame and moral conviction to revive the importance of living an examined life. Shaw is assumed to be the second best English playwright after Shakespeare. From his childhood, with interrupted formal education, Shaw persisted in educating himself to reach the admiration of snobs he was criticizing and to be a worthy one to hear. The ultimate goals of his plays were to make them relevant to the theatergoers.³³

The theater before him was monolithic, because the plays were concerned with entertaining the leading class or were expanding on fairy tale, love stories such as *Romeo and Juliet* or some brave knight fighting for his beloved. Those themes were entertaining the intellectuals and snobs. Shaw, as Darwin did on history-of-science shelves, changed the course of theater by popularizing it and making it equally entertaining and educational. Shaw's philosophy is described as pragmatic and that should not be a discredit. His pragmatism allowed him to be versatile; he wore several hats to convey his messages: humanist, moralist, militant, feminist, entertainer, speaker and philosopher. That requires much subtleness for an entertainer. The historical civil disobedience he borrowed from Socrates and his intellectual loyalty stand out as actions to be remembered. The first is what philosophy has in common with science, and the second is

³³ Shaw wanted to educate the theatergoers of the social disparity, and since 1997 the Labour Party has help to reduce considerably the gap between poor neighborhoods, areas cities and regions.

what philosophy has in common with religion. That is, the more you acquire one of them, the more you become as self-confident as Joan of Arc.³⁴

Archibald Henderson said: "Shaw looks down upon contemporary life from many windows. The world is caught in the dragnet of his infinite variety: few escapes. To each man, Shaw comes in a different capacity. The World at large knows little, astoundingly little, of Shaw the man."³⁵ That is why, after detailing the various features of his literary and public career, the writer has put the study of his personality last.

It is worthy to record that Shaw does not claim to be a great novelist, or a great dramatist, or a great critic, but it is highly significant that Shaw does specifically claim to be a philosopher.³⁶ Shaw's philosophical ideas have generally been regarded by English and American critics either as of undoubted European derivation, or else as fantastic paradoxes totally unrelated to the existing body of thought. Shaw's philosophy has been partially shared by many forerunners,³⁷ nevertheless, he has made his own contribution to the existing body of thought as he set out to change the course of Victorian theater. Shaw is an independent thinker and natural moralist with a clearly coordinated system of philosophy.³⁸

Henderson suspects as leading causes for Shaw's "divine discontent" with progress, with moral systems, with institutions, with regimentation," with flogging in the navy,

³⁴ Jeanne d'Arc's arguments against the Church in Jean Anouilh's *L'Alouette*, (Paris: Edition de la Table Ronde, 1953), 85.

³⁵ Archibald Henderson, *G. B. Shaw-His Life and Works: A Critical Biography* (Cincinnati: Stewart and Kidd Company, 1911), 453.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ G.K. Chesterton, *George B. Shaw* (New York: Ed. Gutenberg EBook, 1909), Produced by Signal Alon, Martin Petit and online Distributed Proofreading team at <http://www.pgdp.net>.

vaccination, science, cannibalism, and a thousand other things, including his loss of faith in education. He has lost his illusions on the subject. Education and culture, he maintains, are for the most part “nothing but the substitution of reading for experience, of literature for life, of the obsolete fictitious for the contemporary real.”³⁹

The writer endeavors in the language of political economy, to award Shaw according to the merits of his contribution. As Plato said in *The Republic*, education is the social equalizer of the citizens.⁴⁰ The Fabian Committee explores reconstruction as educational and social policies. The Fabians established the London School of Economics and Political Science as a force to research and solve fundamental social problems like poverty in the United Kingdom in the late Nineteenth Century. That schools might function as agencies for dealing with the reformation of socioeconomic problems has been a prime tenet of reconstructionist educational theory.⁴¹ Social Reconstructionist thought as an educational policy emerged in the United States from the time of the Great Depression of the 1930s until the Civil Rights period of the 1960s and who saw social reconstruction as the precursor to critical theory in education. The policy was to urge educators and educational institutions to make critical analysis of culture and exhume social problems, like starvation, poverty, crime, prostitution, child labor, etc., and construct a plan for the resolution of these controversial issues as a means of cultural renewal. The Fabians, in particular Shaw and Webbs, address the evils of British life and culture. Yet it was the Fabian Socialists who most successfully addressed the problems

³⁹ Ibid. 479.

⁴⁰ Raymond Dabbah, *Philosophy of Public Education* (February 3, 2010-06-27).

⁴¹ Important sources for social Re-constructionist as an educational theory include George S. Count's *Dare the School Build a New Social Order* (N.Y.: John Day, 1932); Theodore Brameld, *Toward a Reconstructed Philosophy of Education* (N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1956)N/A.

of poverty and their relief through research and higher education in modern Britain. Their most tangible product was the London School of Economics. Fabian Socialism took on economic and social issues and proposed reforms that were implemented into law in 20th Century Britain. That was an openly declared anti-capitalist move. In the *Manifesto* Shaw wrote:

“The most striking result of Nineteenth century capitalism in Britain had been to divide Society into hostile classes, with large appetites and no dinners at one extreme, and large dinners and no appetites at the other”⁴²

The Fabians believed that knowledge was power and, in the hand of key policy-makers, guaranteed social reforms. Shaw believed that equality should be the key issue rather than minimum wages, health issues, and such. The Fabians made a real difference, according to Dave Hill.⁴³ From their ideas, a new social order emerged, an order which, ironically, made their very existence redundant.

Shaw’s fundamental postulate is that morality is not a stagnant quality, the same yesterday, today and forever, but transitory and evolutionist. He said that morality flows: “what people call vice is eternal; what they call virtue is mere fashion.”⁴⁴ A celebrated French critic once declared, “La morale, est purement géographique.” Shaw goes far beyond this in the assertion that morality is a creature of occasion, conditioned by circumstance. That is historically considered as progress which connotes repudiation of

⁴² *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies* <http://www.jeps.com>.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ What might be morally wrong in England may not be in France.

custom: social advance takes effect through the replacement of the old institutions by new ones.⁴⁵

In Shaw's vision in *Mrs. Warren Profession*, the writer sees an agreement with his opposition to the Judeo-Christian's view of prostitution by Guy de Maupassant. Shaw's re-enactment of Guy De Maupassant's story in the 19th century was convincing enough that Shaw was determined to hold the social bull by its horns. Shaw's philosophy is not as revolutionary as Karl Marx's historical dialectic, but he seeks reform. Shaw's philosophy is pragmatic. It summarizes all human progress as a contribution of nineteenth century literature.⁴⁶ Literature for the first time becomes the devil's advocate and gives to men another outlay to see the good in the light of social advancement. Like many philosophers before him, Shaw was a reformer. He stood up for his beliefs regardless of the social pressure. That intellectual integrity was first exercised by Socrates. Shaw said, because he has greater vision for humanity that compelled him to stand against the British leaders about their participation in World War I, instead of being silent on the consequences of the War. Henderson said:

The philosophy whose paean is glorification of the man whose standards are within himself, whose actions are controlled by his will, carries with it certain inevitable and shocking consequences. It is the clearest proof of Shaw's consistency that he has never swerved one jot from the course marked out by himself. He accepts the disagreeable consequences along with the rest, neither blinking nor shirking them. George Brandes epitomized his doctrine in the words: 'To obey one's senses is to have character. He who allows himself to be guided by his own passions has individuality.'⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Max Weber, Encyclopedia Britannica, 2009. Encyclopedia Britannica online, April 20, 2009.

⁴⁶ Claude Puzin, *Litterature du 19e siècle -Texte et documents* (Paris: Ed. Nathan, 1987), 9.

⁴⁷ Henderson, 465.

Shaw has avowed that he regards this as excellent doctrine, both in Brandes' form and in the older form.⁴⁸

The anarchistic spirit is mounted around the words' character. The old beauty is no longer beautiful; the new truth is no longer true. Every age has its dominant, accepted ideas and forms. The ideas of the evolutionary trend of human ideals of the triumphant hypocrisy of current morality of the necessity for challenging and repudiating the code of conduct of humans were in the air. Nicolas De Chamfort's contemptuous assertion: "Il y a à parier que toute idée publique, toute convention reçue est une sottise; car elle a convenu au plus grand nombre."⁴⁹

William Blake performs the ceremony of the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*; the Pirate King in W. S. Gilbert's *Pirates of Penzance* repudiates bourgeois respectability in his reply to Frederick's urgent request to accompany him back to civilization. In *The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg*, Mark Twain posits a new reading of the Lord's Prayer: "Lead us (not) into temptation" as he arraigns the morality of custom in *Was It Heaven or Hell?*⁵⁰

St. Joan

In *Saint Joan*, Shaw uses forty-one superlatives, comparatives, contrasting to elucidate his social criticism of medieval society and the Catholic Church. Again, one cannot help noticing that Shaw's critics were well *a propos*. Shaw's homeland has been the battlefield of Catholic against Protestant. The historical, religious intolerance Joan

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ John Gardner, *On Moral Fiction* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), iii.

⁵⁰ 'Giving the Devil His Due:' a review, by Shaw, Vols. I and II. Of the works of Friedrich Nietzsche. Supplement to the *Saturday Review* (May 13, 1899), 411.

experienced is still alive in Ireland. With a lot of subtlety he passes judgment on the Catholic Church, questioning religious truth as it was done 2300 years before he wrote *Saint Joan*. Shaw's fundamental postulate is that morality is not a stagnant quality. Morality flows: "What people call vice is eternal; what they call virtue is mere fashion."⁵¹ That explanation is the time line Shaw starts *St. Joan's* preface with it:

Joan of Arc, a village girl from the Vosges, was born about 1412; burnt for heresy, witchcraft, and sorcery in 1431; rehabilitated after a fashion in 1456; designated Venerable in 1904; declared Blessed in 1908; and finally canonized in 1920. It takes 500 years for the Church to redeem herself for a crime against a professed and pious Catholic and, projector of a Crusade against the Husites, in fact Joan was the first Protestant martyr.⁵²

Shaw is calling the reader's attention to the necessity for change. Religious certainty must not be considered as truth, as the Sophists, the first Humanists, suggested 400 years B.C. The critical mind would ask what causes the change of heart of the Catholic Church and why it took 500 years? Since then, there has not been a significant change in the Catholic Church; except Popes have come and gone. It would have been humiliating for the Church to confess wrong doing against a member who has received direct messages from God. Such action would arouse more questions and even cause a rebellion. The same intolerance is being perpetuated in Ireland today, and the Church remains silent. Shaw believes that Joan's canonization was just a political gesture and the morality of the Church, which is a social lie, remains the same. Even though the historical user of the social lie, Plato, argues that the noble lie is necessary in order to keep a stable social structure. From Medieval times to today, the Church has been the promoter of social lies. Shaw sees truth and justice not as abstract principles external to

⁵¹ Joan of Arc's trial and history was carrying this kind of controversy, depending on one class.

⁵² George B. Shaw, *Saint Joan: A Chronicle Play in Six Scenes and an Epilogue* (Australia: Project of Gutenberg, ebook, 1924), 43.

man, but human passions, which have, in their time, conflicted with higher passions as well as lower ones. Shaw's life and philosophy have much affinity with Joan's. That affinity drew him to her trial story. Even though Shaw was citizen of a country where the spirit of laws was determinant, and he was educated, Shaw still falls short in pointing out Joan's mistakes. The temporality of the truth is at stake here, when Joan is compared to Socrates. The noble lie prevailed in Athens (Greece) as well as in Rouen (France).

In the nineteenth century the visionary poet and artist Blake was often ridiculed during his lifetime but has since been recognized as one of the major poets of English literature. His work is distinguished by the creation and illustration of a complex mythological system, in which imagination is of paramount importance, serving as the vehicle of humanity's communion with the spiritual essence of reality. By bringing his unconventional perspective to bear on such subjects as religion, morality, art, and politics, Blake has become recognized as both a social rebel and as a "hero of the imagination" who played a key role in advancing the Romantic revolt against rationalism.

Henderson said:

Formerly, when there was a question of canonizing a pious person, the devil was allowed an advocate to support his claims to the pious person's soul. But nobody ever dreamt of openly defending him as a much misunderstood and fundamentally right-minded regenerator of the race until the nineteenth century, when William Blake went over to the other side and started a devil's party. Formerly for himself, he was a poet, and so passed as a paradoxical madman instead of a blamer.⁵³

Saint Joan relates how Joan, a simple, faithful country girl, sees visions and hears voices that she believes come directly from God. Accepting the visions and voices as God's direction for her life, Joan successfully drives the English from Orleans and crowns the Dauphin as the King of France. She is burned at the stake for her efforts.

⁵³ Henderson, 454-455.

Throughout the play, Joan must endure difficulties. She is mocked for her dressing up like a man, judged as incapable of defeating the English, and is considered mad for believing that God speaks directly to her. In spite of the criticism she receives, she remains true to the direction of the visions and faithful to her God, whom she puts above the Church and the State.

Through her efforts and persuasiveness, she convinces the Dauphin to give her a horse, armor, and soldiers so she can lead a siege against the English in Orleans. She is successful in her campaign against the enemy, freeing Orleans and winning the admiration of her soldiers and the common people. Encouraged by them and her faith, she plans to march onward to Paris and reclaim the city from the English. Joan is given courage by her belief that God wants her to restore order to France.

The nobility is fearful of Joan; she is a threat to the power that they hold in the Church and the State. The Earl of Warwick is particularly afraid of her influence and offers a reward for her to the Burgundian captors.⁵⁴

Shaw uses *Saint Joan* (1923) as a vehicle for expounding his Marxist philosophy and feminist ideas. He portrays Joan of Arc as an illiterate young lady who was confronted by a medieval, male-dominated society, and was wrongly burned for heresy, witchcraft, and sorcery in 1431 for taking the responsibility to free France. In the prologue of his analysis, he sees a domination of the aristocracy over England's population and that of France. Because of this preexisting, feudalistic condition, the outcome of her trial was normal and accepted by the British, as well as the French. Shaw does not dispute that "a great wrong was done to Joan and to the conscience of the world

⁵⁴ George B. Shaw, *Saint Joan*. Epilogue ... These abnormalities were the only ones that were irresistibly prepotent in Joan; and they brought her to the stake. .. 17.

by her burning.”⁵⁵ He does, however, object that this wrong proves the medieval world “uncivilized” as compared to the modern world.

Shaw portrays Joan of Arc as the first feminist, the most notable warrior-Saint in the Christian calendar, and because of the lethargy of the Dauphin, he describes her as the “queerest fish”⁵⁶ among the intriguing events worthy of the Middle Ages. She is, in fact, one of the first Protestants to make a great sacrifice for the cause of freedom and the relationship of a Christian with the Church in matters of communication with God.⁵⁷ (The Church must accept the fact that God can communicate directly with anyone). Joan is also one of the first apostles of nationalism and the first French practitioner of Napoleonic realism as distinguished from the sporting, ransom-gambling chivalry of her time.⁵⁸

Shaw is known for his advocacy for the underdog. He attacks social hypocrisy in the plays, *Widower's Houses* (1892) and *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1898). He stands his ground even when the criticism of his plays, such as *Arms and the Man* (1894) and *The Man of Destiny* (1894) was fierce, and when he speaks against the British participation in War World I. Shaw's radical rationalism is his absolute disregard of conventions. His enthusiastic dialectic interest and verbal reasoning power often turn the stage into a forum of ideas more openly than in the famous discourses on the life force as in *Don*

⁵⁵ George Bernard Shaw, *Saint Joan*, MonkeyNotes by PinkMonkey.com.

⁵⁶ George Bernard Shaw, *Saint Joan* (New York: Penguin Books, 1923), 1.

⁵⁷ Jean Anouilh, *L'Alouette* (Paris: Ed. De La Table Ronde, 1953), 85.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

Juan in Hell (1905), or the third act of the dramatization of a woman in love looking for a man, *Man and Superman* (1903).⁵⁹

Sophocles advises that one may discern an author's intentions by looking for material not required by the plot or intended simply to please the reader or the audience. Shaw's lengthy epilogue tells this writer that Shaw wanted to make a religious point, to end the religious war in Ireland. Taking into account Sophocles' advice, Shaw intended to discredit The Catholic Church, because Joan was a renegade, because she questioned the questioner. Thus Shaw labeled Joan as Revolutionary, and Protestant.⁶⁰

Shaw's reasons for writing *Saint Joan* were to draw the reader's attention to the Noble lie of the Catholic Church. He does not dispute the wrong done to Joan and to the conscience of the world by her burning. He said, on the matter of Joan's trial, that by the standards of today, the trial was much fairer and more deliberate than it would have been in the modern era. Shaw grants that nowadays punishment may be more "human"--hanging or shooting, as opposed to burning--but that, "as far as toleration is concerned, Joan's trial and execution in Rouen in 1431 might have been an event of today. Shaw appears to be suggesting the troubles in Ireland are not state crimes, but a transgression of the boundaries of Irish society found acceptable. Shaw's point is that modern societies are not less than their medieval counterparts. To make his point, Shaw criticizes modern society, especially in the scientific realm, for claiming an infallibility that not even the Pope claims for himself."⁶¹

⁵⁹ Sabrina Gimenez, *Rhetorical Analysis on G.B. Shaw Play Joan of Arc*.
<http://www.zinch.com/TalentShow/ViewDetails.aspx?Filed=25695>.

⁶⁰ Shaw, *Saint Joan*, 10- 21.

⁶¹ Shaw is trying to compare Joan's trial and execution to his experience of having witnessed religious execution in Ireland.

Shaw's historical, materialistic analyze however remains unclear enough to satisfy the reader. His analysis does not embrace fully the dialectical philosophy. Joan was faced with a situation that has two sets of problems.

1 – A human's life is essentially social; that makes the individual subservient to society. Therefore, the human is more prone to accept a social lie. What is a social lie?

A social lie is a cultural acceptance of the state in a function of protector of its citizens and in return, the citizens are obligated to defend its sovereignty against the enemies and pay their taxes. Its leader is a supreme being with blue-blood ascendancy. Joan was under the imprint of that social lie. A social lie is sometime the obligation of individual or psychological fear to obey the laws of the state that venerate a King or a President. The prime example, 9/11, was perceived as an attack on America; therefore, America has the obligation to defend herself. As much as Joan could be an evolutionist, she was under the spell of the "social-lie." The demands of the "social lie" are sometime that the citizen must die to defend his/her country. Joan was dealing with the confusion of the social lie. That was the underlying conscience of the people and Joan. It makes the people believe that they belong to a State, and in order to be a good citizen, one must pay his taxes and defend the land that makes up the State.

2 – The second is the top layer of the problem and it is called a noble lie. It owes its immanence to the Church. When rooted in the habit of man, it does not have boundaries and has unlimited power over the Church, and the clergy are the watchdogs of the noble lie.

Joan of Arc was a nationalist because she believed in the social lie that gives one pride, and it demands the ultimate sacrifice for her defense. She risked her life for the

Dauphin. The Dauphin, in return, denied her his support to free Paris. The Spartans are the historical example of courageous people who give up their life for their State in the name of the noble lie. The societal forces would not have burned Joan because they are national. One of Napoleon's more memorable quotes is that history is "an agreed upon set of lies written by the victors."⁶² When the social lie is repeated as often as it can be, it becomes truth. The social lie is so embedded in our way of life that one cannot tell it from a fact. The noble lie is as old as the world; it is a myth that the Church, its principal beneficiary, would even excommunicate a Pope to preserve it. The noble lie is international and global, and everyone is afraid to question its practices. In politics a noble lie is a myth or untruth, often, but not invariably, of a religious nature, knowingly told by an elite to maintain social harmony, particularly the social position of that elite. The noble lie is a concept originated by Plato as described in *The Republic*. However, the concept has far greater scope and has been used by many commentators to talk about much more modern issues in politics. A noble lie, although it may benefit all parties, is different from a white lie, since a white lie does not cause discord if uncovered, whereas noble lies are usually of a nature such that they would do so. Karl Popper accused Plato of trying to base religion on a noble lie as well. In *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Popper remarks, "It is hard to understand why those of Plato's commentators who praise him for fighting against the subversive conventionalism of the Sophists, and for establishing a spiritual naturalism ultimately based on religion, fail to censure him for

⁶² History in the most part is the opinion of the victors. Dr. John Henrik Clarke.
www.Zimbio.com/Black +History+Month. Compiled & Edited by Phillip True, Jr.

making a convention, or rather an invention, the ultimate basis of religion.”⁶³ Religion for Plato is a noble lie, at least if we assume that Plato means all this sincerely, not cynically. Popper finds Plato's conception of religion to have been very influential on subsequent thought.⁶⁴

Criticism of Shaw in *Saint Joan*

After reading *Saint Joan* and some of the major works of George Bernard Shaw, the writer is in better place to see and understand the totality of his intention. Also, this paper is removed from 1431 by some five centuries and almost a century away from the publication of Shaw's *Saint Joan*. The sociopolitical enlightenment has evolved to arm the twenty-first century intellectuals with better criticism to show us some of the shortcomings of Shaw.

As inquisitive as he was, Shaw failed to omit in his plays his personal vision. However, Wayne Dyer said, “One sees and comprehends with his own mind, which sometimes is not objective.” That makes writing subjective.⁶⁵ The following criticisms are subjective, but they are pertinent to underscore Joan's suicidal manner, the theory of conspiracy against Joan as alluded to by Shaw. Shaw's mind was side-tracked by his own interest not what could be remembered as the fundamental cause of some of the alleged attributes.

It is obvious that Joan was under the influence of the “*social lie*,” which attributes to the King a divine origin. She undertook the mission to free France without any

⁶³ Soldier or Society? Remarks on the Domestic Importance of Being Valiant. Ao. Univer. Prof. Dr. Christian Stadler, University of Vienna (Austria/EU). Christian.Stadler@univie.ac.at

⁶⁴ Shaw, *Saint Joan*, 43.

⁶⁵ Wayne W. Dyer, *The Power of Intention* (Carlsbad: Hay House, Inc., 2004), 3.

physical immunity granted to her, except the honor after death and a place in heaven. Karl Marx said rightfully that religion is the opiate of the people.⁶⁶ Joan, in spite of being uneducated, commits to a mission and the enemies she had disgraced and defeated, the French King she had crowned and the English King whose crown she had kicked into the Loire, were equally glad to be rid of her. Joan lacked analytical comprehension of what she was up against. Her heroism was immersed into much naivety. She set out on her mission without any consideration of the means, but she was focused on the end, which was immortality by being recognized by the Church. As Shaw said, she was not told that heroes die alone like Napoleon.⁶⁷

The third element is the noble lie. First used by Plato in *The Republic* to describe a city whose inhabitants are organized into categories: The Rulers, Auxiliaries, Farmers, etc., The Rulers, he said, would be chosen from the military elite (called Guardians); they were good at shepherding, and caring for the interests of the community. The Auxiliaries would be Guardians by training.⁶⁸

The Rulers, Plato stated, must tell the people of the city "The Noble Lie"--that the categories of Rulers, Auxiliaries, Farmers, etc., was not due to circumstances within the people's control, upbringing, or education, but because of God's intervention. God, the lie went, had put gold, silver, and iron into each person's soul, and those metals

⁶⁶ Karl Marx/Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (London: Andy Blunden Edition, 1848), 48.

⁶⁷ George B. Shaw, *Saint Joan: A Chronicle Play in Six Scenes and an Epilogue* (London: Penguin, 1924), 5.

⁶⁸ Bertrand Russell, *The History of Western Philosophy* (1945), identifies three parts of *The Republic*: 1. Books I-V: the eutopia portraying the ideal community, parting from attempting to define justice. (Cambridge University Press, 1945), 169-192.

determine where a person's station was in life.⁶⁹ The Rulers told the people of the city that if their own children were found with bronze or iron in their soul, the child would drop down the ranks accordingly. Furthermore if a farmer's child was born with gold in his soul, he would rise up to the Guardian level. The Rulers also said that people had different metals in their bloodstream, and therefore could not intermarry.⁷⁰

The lie is necessary, Plato argues, in order to keep a stable social structure. In Plato's mind, the noble lie is a religious lie that is fed to the masses to keep them under control and happy with their situation in life.⁷¹ Plato did not believe most people were smart enough to look after their own and society's best interest. The few smart people of the world needed to lead the rest of the flock, Plato said. Thus, the noble lie had to continue.⁷²

The next chapter will be devoted to André Obey, the second playwright. André Obey has a more conciliatory approach to Joan's trial. A parallel will be drawn between Obey's life and his vision in *La Fenêtre*. His plays are from a different school of thought.

⁶⁹ Russell, 145.

⁷⁰ Religious explanation of social inequality.

⁷¹ Kenneth Dorter, *The Transformation of Plato's Republic* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006), 329.

⁷² Ibid.

CHAPTER 4

ANDRÉ OBEY'S LIFE AND WORKS

In this chapter we are going to look into André Obey's life and make a Neoclassicist assessment on the task of peacemaker by his writing *La Fenêtre*. Obedience, faithfulness, belief in a Supreme Being and acceptance that the individual is subservient to the society are the cornerstone of the classicist philosophy and are also akin to Neoclassical literature. As the Catholic Church teaches that Christ was the sacrificial lamb who died for the Christians on Calvary some 2,000 years ago, Neoclassicists believe in their plays and literature in the existence of the hero like the Christ. The idea of sacrifice might seem rather pagan to most Christians; it was not questioned in the era of classicism. After all, sacrifice usually means and has usually meant animals or humans sacrificed to a god or gods. This analogy makes Joan of Arc a sacrificial lamb for the French.

André Obey is popular nationally because of the role he played in the theater in France, along with dramatists of his generation like Giraudoux, Cocteau, Anouilh, Sartre. The language barrier limits his popularity to France said Judith D. Suther and Earle D. Clowney, two professors who decided to translate some of Obey's plays into English. These translations were published in 1975 with two objectives in mind:

- 1- To acquaint English-speaking audiences with Obey's theater.
- 2- To reaffirm the vitality of inherited patterns in Obey's dramatic art

Obey's approaches were recorded by the two professors as the rebirth of the myth. The myth in the classical plays was buried by the ascending force of "*L'avènement de la conscience historique et nationale.*"¹

The translated plays illustrate not only Obey's strength and vision as dramatist, but also the indestructible power of that mode called classical. The two professors went further to say: "In the time when the immediacy of fads and practical politics and social activism often dominates our search for values, it is salutary to hear a voice that speaks with the coolness of ancient grace in the idiom of very contemporary drama."²

In the second volume of translations Suther and Clowney concur that Obey's style of rewriting the classical plays with 20th Century changes in mind is neoclassical. To support that statement, they write: "His creative imagination thrives on the transformation of the complex and contradictory matter of legend into new statement."³

For example, *The Reunion* reflects his lifelong immersion in *The Odyssey* and his vision of the personal tragedy of Ulysses and Penelope. *Moses and the Mountain* uses the material of the Old Testament to assess the relation of God to man, a relation which Obey sees as desperately one-sided. *La Fenêtre (The Window)*, an unpretentious play about Joan of Arc in which Joan is not a character, re-enacts the day of May 30, 1431, in the life of a modest Norman family whose house overlooks the town square of Rouen. Like most of his plays, these three plays illustrate the theory of the use of a bare stage

¹ Dominique Rincé-Bernard Lecherbonnier, *Littératures et Documents XIX siècle* (Edition Nathan, 1988), 4.

² Earle D. Clowney and Judith D. Suther, trans. *André Obey : 3 Plays* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1972), 1.

³ Ibid., 2.

Jacques Copeau and carry messages relevant to modern theatergoers in neoclassical philosophy.

The Neoclassical Period was a time (1660 to 1798) when the social order was undergoing great change. The middle class was rising in power and prestige. The creation of new wealth through trade was challenging the established hierarchies, and the idea of the “divine right of the kings” (Kings were authorized to rule as God’s representatives on earth) was losing its hold as the rule because of the French Revolution. In literature, the “endless flux of events and feelings” which people were experiencing in the midst of such massive social change was reflected in a new emphasis on strict conventions and forms. As a result, the literature of the period has sometimes seemed stylized to the modern reader, and not many students will consider this a favorite period of literary history because of the conflict of generations.

The biggest differences between the neoclassical assumption about reality and those common to our age include:

1. The neoclassical minds; natural passions are not necessarily good; natural passions must be subordinated to social needs and strictly controlled.
2. Social needs are more important to neoclassical society than individual needs.

These conflict with our modern preoccupation with the individual—in our time, the needs of the individual tend to be considered the most important, but this was not true in neoclassical literature.

3. Neoclassical thinkers believed that man could find meaning in order itself—in the order of nature, social hierarchies, government, religion, even in the order within literary forms.

The fact that these ideas occupy writers' minds during this period indicates a strong current of rebellious thought. Each current of change was perceived as a rebellion against the precedent current of thought, like Classicism versus Neoclassicism. The above-stated ideas were not universally accepted but were, in fact, argued and proven in literature itself. There were dominant, but not universal, ideas of the period. Writers of the period often turned to the classical past for stability and the order they craved, both of which were threatened. This writer is primarily talking about a relatively small portion of the world, mostly England and France.

Important works of literature of the time (include Molière's *Tartuffe*) used marriage as a trope for social obligations and social contracts. There were strong presumptions that individuals would marry within their social class in order to form alliances and provide a stable framework for the passing down of wealth. In religion, there was a search for natural law, for something beyond kings and individual subjective experience in an attempt to stabilize existence. Deism emerged as a dominant religious philosophy of the period, emphasizing ideas about God as the Great Planner or watchmaker who assembles the universe, winds it up, and then leaves it ticking away on its own without interfering in its day-to-day operations. The idea of an interpersonal God and a logical universe were central to Deism. Obey tends to equate morality with reason and logic. *Moses and the Mountain*, completed in 1969, ranks in Obey's mind as one of his best. *Moses* is sure to invite comparison with *Noah* and his earlier plays.

Obey put a classical frame on his plays. That consideration led us to consider the great variety of subjects treated by Obey: An "Introduction au Cid" under the constraint of the critics and the societal changes, he corrected the inconsistencies of Corneille's

masterpiece by creating new subtleties with Corneille seated in the audience; adaptations of Sophocles' tragedy, as well as Aristophanes' *Peace*, and the result is an eminently stage-worthy play. In Obey's version of the Iphigenia story, there is no faithful old servant who tries and fails to dispatch a letter over untold dozens of miles, no escape for anyone at the end. Each character is caught in the fate which we see gathering force from the opening scene, so that when the momentum is spent, we are left with a disturbing credibility of it all. The structural defect and resulting ambiguity that plagued earlier versions of the legend, including Euripides'--the lack of a real protagonist--are resolved by Obey. Ulysses is the protagonist of *One for the Wind*. He is by far the strongest, the most human and the most sympathetic of the characters. It is he, who is constantly searching for ways to save Iphigenia's life, and it is he who comes to the realization that imperfection and injustice are good substitutions for the ruling order of this world. The entire thread of the plot is wrapped around Ulysses and his actions as the plot progresses. He is a logical choice for the protagonist of a drama so intensely familial that only an outsider could see beyond the immediate impasse and act on his vision, said Suther. It is obvious when Iphigenia dies there is no one left of interest except Ulysses. His last words to her are a genuine testimony of his revelation and a devastatingly formalistic surrender to the force of evil.⁴

Suther clarifies Obey's interpolation:

The dead soldier, another interpolation of Obey, is scarcely less successful than a sympathetic Ulysses. Externally, the soldier serves the function of a chorus. He interprets the events of the drama and breaks the flow of action into neat structural blocks. He is a sort of collective conscience for those who are perpetrating this heinous crime, but

⁴ Ibid.

conveniently, no one can hear his accusations. Much more important, however, this uninitiated young man is the voice of the anonymous millions who die in wars without ever knowing what the conflict was all about. He is the youth betrayed by his elders and, as such, is the perfect partner for Iphigenia. Together, they prefer their world of absolutes to the distorted honor that adults try to impose on them. She is not the virtuous maiden of royal blood destined to marry a handsome, courageous goddess's son. She is a child on the brink of maturity and, like most adolescents, she is rebellious and stubborn. The soldier--a private no doubt-- and the girl refuse to leap the gap between childhood and adulthood. Their refusal is so unconvincing that it sets off in high relief the helplessness of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra and the tragic consciousness of Ulysses.⁵

Obey's Iphigenia is an idealist who belongs in some other life. "Nobody can touch me," she warns as she frees herself from all contact with this world. Her admonitions are clear and unhesitating. While her life is being gambled away, she sleeps, and wakes up to a merciless lucidity and falls in step with her soldier, a drummer whose beat only Ulysses can hear, but his will to march is heavy with age and tragic wisdom.⁶

The one echo sounding through Obey's plays is the desire for peace, not only between individuals but also between nations. Although his experience as soldier is probably largely responsible for his preoccupation with peace, he may very well have reached the same conviction simply by observing the condition of the world in the twentieth century.⁷

⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁶ Earle D. Clowney, "The Plays of André Obey: An Analytical Study," diss., University of Missouri, 1968, 105.

⁷ Clowney and Suther, *André Obey, 3 More Plays*, 2.

Ultimatum expresses several views about peace. The first is its impermanence--the fact that it has to be proclaimed again and again. Consider, for example, the remarks of the Austrian count:

As-tu remarqué. . . ? La paix est ... abstraite elle est si peu réelle, qu'il faut, pour qu'elle existe, lui donner un surnom.

Paix de Cambrai, paix d'Amiens, de Londres ou de Carthage. Des Pyrénées ou de Westphalie! D'Auguste, de César ou de Napoléon! Que de paix. . .!⁸

Later, an ironic observation is made by *La Voyante*, an indication that the absence of peace is due to peace-loving minds:

Ils aiment la paix! Ils aiment le pax!. . . Ah! Ce qu'il y a d'insensé sur cette terre désastreuse, en ce cimetière d'empires et de générations, parmi cette poussière d'ossements et de pierres c'est que le faiseur de ruines, l'emplisseur de cimetières, le destructeur et tout et de soi-même: l'homme, c'est que l'homme, en son Coeur, aime la paix comme une mère.. Haha! C'est à pleurer. . .⁹

Obey's feeling is justified per the Cold War and by the ascension of the Soviet Union. In the Cold War, men spent time and energy storing ammunition for fear that war would come and find them ill-prepared. This fear meant that peace time was spent preparing for war. The president of China, Mao Tse-tung, said to that effect: "If you want peace, prepare the war."¹⁰

Before the period of the Cold War there was a variety and newness in the theater-- a brief wave of the intimate movement, where the writers hinted at situations instead of pointing to them directly as the modern authors would do. Obey in *Une Fille pour du*

⁸ I. D. R. P., Jacques Le Dauphin et Patrick Simon, *Un partenariat avec le mouvement de la paix*. 19 Septembre 2001.

⁹ Ibid. 16.

¹⁰ Andrew J. Nathan and Robert S. Ross, *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress: China's Search for Security* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 13.

Vent, eliminated all ruses and counter-ruses and peripheral intrigues that could not be comprehended by the modern mind.

Before proceeding, why Obey and each of the other playwrights (Anouilh and Shaw) have different visions of the judgment and martyrdom of Joan of Arc. In order to understand Obey's frame of mind, it is necessary to study some of his plays and from there, one may deduce a clearer position. Wayne Dyer said a writer projects in his writing his vision of the world.¹¹ Obey is not an Ibsenian like Shaw or an existentialist like Anouilh; however, what has come out as dominant characteristics of his plays through his protagonists is his pacifism. One can readily see this trend in his plays without looking at his experience.

Obey's Life

The appreciation of the works of a playwright is greatly enhanced by an acquaintance with the salient facts of his life. Such knowledge may help the reader to understand the forces at work in the playwright's production--what makes him favor certain themes; what accounts for the variety of subjects he treats; what lies behind the various techniques he uses; what makes Obey distinct from Shaw and Anouilh and the timing of the social concern addressed in the play. We shall devote this segment to a discussion of his life, pointing out his academic pursuits, his war experiences and then tracing his career from his first theatrical success to include an adaptation of Aristophanes' *Peace* and *La Fenêtre*.

Obey was born on May 8, 1892 in Douai, France, an area in the extreme north of the country. Obey, of Spanish and Flemish parentage (the family name was originally

¹¹ Wayne W. Dyer, *The Power of Intention* (N.Y.: Hay House, Inc., 2010), 265.

spelled “O-B-E-Z”),¹² attended the lycée in Douai. While there, he became acquainted with the early masters of literature and began to realize the beauty and grandeur of the theater. Bored by the work of Racine, he found great delight in the plays of Molière. It was in his German and Greek classes that he became aware of the drama of the past. He was required to translate scenes from the works of Goethe, Sophocles, Aeschylus and Euripides. He completed his *Baccalauréat* (1910), and began reading the plays of Shakespeare, which exerted a great influence on young Obey. In fact, he said he was so impressed that he re-read Shakespeare’s plays and poems year after year, and he visited Stratford-on-Avon on several occasions. He attended the University of Lille from 1910 to 1913, earning his *Licence ès lettres* and a *Licence en droit*.¹³ He said the appreciation for literature had been instilled in him by his father much earlier:

Je crois que c’est mon père, mort quand j’avais onze ans, qui m’a incliné, dès l’enfance, vers la carrière des lettres. Il avait, le cher homme, un respect religieux pour la littérature. C’était un étrange petit artisan, mais qui lisait, avec lenteur et délices, les livres d’Anatole France et, chose bizarre, de Zola. Quand il avait fini le soir venant, sa dure besogne de chaque jour, il se lavait soigneusement, s’asseyait devant un vieux fauteuil et se mettait à lire. Et quand c’était très beau, il me lisait la phrase à haute voix. C’est grâce à lui, et contre la volonté de ma mère que j’ai fait du latin et, quoi qu’il fût déjà mort depuis deux ans, du grec.¹⁴

His love for literature is seconded by his appreciation of music. He gained his first prize in piano from the conservatoire de Musique in Douai and admits that:

La musique a été constamment présente dans ma vie... et non pas seulement dans ma vie, mais au-dessus d’elle et par-dessous, la survolant comme une nuée, la transperçant, dans ses bras mouillés, vers je ne sais quelle mer finale, bref, une musique dominatrice, plus proche de moi qu’une campagne, plus fidèle qu’une

¹² Clowney, diss. University of Missouri 1968, 15.

¹³ Wikipédia L’encyclopédie libre. [Http://wikipédia.org](http://wikipédia.org).

¹⁴ Ibid.

amie, plus tyrannique que la plus exigeante maîtresse: une sorte d'âpre hantise, enracinée au fond de mon être comme une deuxième conscience.¹⁵

When Obey was twenty-two years old, the First World War broke out. Beginning his military service in October 1913, he served in the infantry and was wounded twice, once seriously in the head (1915). Near the end of that year he was overcome by a feeling of over-all weakness and he was sent to the hospital in Limoges. He arrived there in 1916 and, after his recuperation, remained there as a male nurse until 1919. He used the time spent there to write about various aspects of the war that he remembered and his "souvenirs de guerre" were published in the *Revue de Paris*. The success of his memoirs encouraged Obey to attempt a literary career in Paris. On moving to the capital on May 6, 1919, he worked as columnist as well as literary and sports critic for various newspapers from 1922 to 1927. Of this period he stated: "Je faisais du journalisme avant que le théâtre me fasse vivre. J'ai écrit jusqu'à trois articles par jour: une vie de chien que je ne recommande à personne."¹⁶

He also wrote articles of a more personal nature, especially for the *Impartial Français*, and a few of these served as the point of departure for his book *L'Apprenti sorcier*. His debut in drama starts with Denys Amiel's suggestion to create with Obey a dramatic work based on a short story that Obey had written. This joint effort became the successful tragi-comedy *La Souriante Madame Beudet*, performed in 1921. The critics showered the two young writers with praise.¹⁷ It is a story where the miracle is put to work to give a neoclassic touch to the play. Madeleine, the protagonist of the play,

¹⁵ Pol Gaillard, *Le Théâtre* 'Les lettres françaises' 30 Octobre, 1947. 6.

¹⁶ Ibid., 17.

¹⁷ Herman Grégoire dans "*Paris-Théâtre*" no. 73, 1953.

shocked by her discovery that she is growing old without having enjoyed life, decides to kill her husband Paul with whom she has many incompatibilities. As he refuses to discuss even the possibility of their divorce or separation, Madeleine secretly loads a revolver to kill her husband. She reconsiders her criminal plan, but before she can unload the gun, Paul gets it, and the gun fires while aimed at her. Although she is unharmed, she is forced to recognize the extent of Paul's goodness when he interprets the near tragedy as her desire to be killed. An invisible hand intervenes to seduce the criminal intent and leaves the viewers in suspense.

Les Amis de la dernière heure is an implicit critique of the false pretense of society. Here again, we see a psychological peace-making situation that the protagonists face. The officials supervising the execution of a prisoner are seduced by the friendship they cultivate with the latter while he awaits his execution because of a malfunction of the guillotine. Once the guillotine is fixed the officials are annoyed, for they regret the forced return to the false world of their administrative duties—duties which require them to execute their friend.

Trio is a story of a husband, who kills his wife's lover in a *ménage à trois*. It is a play that also respects the constraints of the neoclassical plays (unity of time, action and place), because of the controlled environment. Obey, when questioned about his purpose in writing this work, said:

Il m'est, je vous l'avoue, assez difficile de retrouver les mobiles d'une création artistique déjà bien lointaine. Tout ce que je peux vous dire, c'est l'intérêt technique de la construction qui a déclenché mon imagination.
Il me fallait, pour porter au théâtre cette construction un peu particulière, un sujet simple et un peu de personnages. L'éternel triangle dont reprochait au théâtre français l'emploi et même l'abus, m'a paru convenir par sa simplicité et sa généralité.¹⁸

¹⁸ André Obey, Typewritten manuscript.

Natural passion is not necessary good, it must be subordinated to social needs and strictly controlled. This play weighs social needs in face of the individual needs.

La Carcasse was not as successful because of the misrepresentation of a general of the army, and it is also relevant to the directive of neoclassicism. There is the presence of a *force majeure* that no one can control. A retired general is avoiding crisis or tension by turning down an invitation to Paris by the former lover of his wife. He did not want to face embarrassment and he did not want to exchange his comfort zone in the provinces for anonymity in Paris. The suicide of his son forces his decision to leave the provinces.

La Bataille de la Marne, according to Clowney, is a work showing through allegory the plight of France during the German invasion of 1914. The initial situation shows the French soldiers going off to battle. After periodic news reports that, Germans are gaining more ground as they march towards Paris, France realizes that her forces alone are inadequate to stop the enemy and appeals to the allied nations for help. This concentrated effort gives a new direction to the battle, and as the bells of the cathedral of Rheims ring out, everyone knows that victory is certain. *La Bataille de la Marne* implies that the ill-equipped French army faced a losing battle in spite of the rumor that the war was imminent to the French officers. It shows also the weakness of the French nation. It was a play that could not please French leaders. The lack of a protagonist did not give a positive criticism to *La Bataille de la Marne*.

Noé, a Biblical interpretation, is a typical neoclassic play. God intervenes to set Noé in his function of leader as Cham and his brothers defy him for not following God's mandated directions. Noé's sons go their separate ways, and although he has saved them, they show their ingratitude by abandoning him. Saddened by the rejection of his

children, Noé finds comfort in the appearance of the rainbow, indicative that God is still with him.

In *Le Viol de Lucrece*, Obey's first Shakespeare-inspired play, Tarquin, the protagonist, finds out that Lucrece, virtuous wife of Collatin (a Roman army lieutenant), is faithful to her husband. Tarquin's determination to have a consummated relation with Lucrece causes him to break from his camp by night to the home of Lucrece and force her to surrender or be killed. She surrenders but to clean herself of the shame, she summons her husband, confesses and commits suicide. The friends of Collatin call the Roman populace to go and slay Tarquin, who, by causing the death of Lucrece, has slain all that is symbolic of Rome.

The implicit connotation that comes out of Obey's plays is the desire for peace, the highest authority that rewards the main protagonist like Noé. The plots of Obey's plays are sometimes the validation that a person is subservient to the society or ultimate sacrifice of the protagonist for social cause such as in *Trio*, for the social institution of marriage, and Joan of Arc as the sacrificial lamb of France. Obey's experience as a soldier was the probable cause of his preoccupation with peace, exacerbated more likely by the war-prone era of the twentieth century. Obey finds in his belief the causes of Joan's ultimate sacrifice.

Joan of Arc, the Lamb of France: Christianity and Sacrifice

The attitude of France's intelligentsia, such as Anouilh and Obey, evolved toward more reconciliation of Joan of Arc as heroine versus a womanizing view of Joan of Arc. The heroism of Joan is acknowledged at the national level and with a Christian attitude of tolerance of the English. Labruno and Toutain said:

Sorcière condamnée par un tribunal ecclésiastique, fille du peuple, incarnation du patriotisme, gloire religieuse canonisée en 1920, Jeanne d'Arc n'a cessé d'être 'utilisée' jusqu'à la seconde guerre mondiale où Jeanne patriote chassant l'envahisseur s'oppose à la Jeanne vichyste victime des Anglais. Dans son siècle, elle a 'délié la corde qui enserrait la France' en donnant un coup d'arrêt à la progression anglaise.¹⁹

Even though, Obey has seen George B. Shaw's *Saint Joan* before *La Fenêtre*, he has all the difficulties to get away from the French's melodramatic view of Joan of Arc's trial, because he tied to the plot the peace-maker in *La fenêtre* into the melodramatic attitude. French critics paid little attention to George B. Shaw until the Brussels premiere of *Candida* in February 1907 and Archibald Henderson persistent inquiry to distinguished literary men, including Jules Lemaître dramatic reviewer for *Le Journal des deux mondes* and one of the finest critics of his day, and playwright Jules Claretie.²⁰ France, a country that labored in national law (*la loi Salique*) the spirit of women bashing mindset has sudden heart change to become praising Joan of Arc as heroine. Joan of Arc becomes the corner stone to fortify the fragile ego for English's domination of the One Hundred Year War. This new state of mind of French intelligensia here (Obey and Anouilh) have one recourse to adapt the theory of sacrificed lamb in another words use Church's terminologies.

La Fenêtre

La Fenêtre is a play that displays the predominance of the concept of love. *La Fenêtre* is an unpretentious play about Joan's martyrdom in which Joan is not a character. It re-enacts the day of May 30, 1431, in the life of a modest Norman family whose house

¹⁹ Gerard Labrune and Philippe Toutain, *L'Histoire de France: France in the Middle Ages 987-1460: From Hugh Capet to Joan of Arc*-Duby, Georges, 1991. carolyn@maximumrocknroll.com.

²⁰ Michel W. Pharand, *Bernard Shaw and the French* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 130.

overlooks the town square of Rouen. *La Fenêtre* has a uniqueness, it has never been performed, unfortunately. Obey confesses to have written *La Fenêtre* in approximately one hour. The concept of love in *La Fenêtre* is the parental symbol of Joan of Arc's sacrifice of herself for the cause. Joan never tells all God's message relayed to her by Saints Catherine and Margaret and the Angel Michael. That brought Shaw to call her silence suicidal and the Dauphin's as a feudal conspiracy. Catherine in the play symbolizes Joan of Arc's questions:

What about the King? The King of France? A man who owes her everything, everything from head to toe from his crown to his spurs, what is the King of France doing? Playing cards? At Bourges? And what about her saints? Michael, Margaret and Catherine? my patron saint? They were so chatty in the skies of Lorraine –does Normandy give them laryngitis? And what about God?

God is watching the whole thing from his balcony? Just the way we are? It is unbelievable.²¹

Catherine's words do not reflect what a neoclassicist would say but, Obey, by doing so, is setting the stage for political entertainment and a literary work of Symbolism.

The symbolist movement was formally launched in 1886, when the poet Jean Moréas (1856–1910) published a manifesto in the major Parisian newspaper *Le Figaro*. Moréas described symbolism as:

The enemy of teaching, of declamation, of false sensitivity, of objective description, Symbolic poetry seeks to clothe the Idea in a perceptible form that nevertheless will not be the ultimate goal in itself, but, which, even as it serves to express the Idea, remains subject to it. The Idea, for its part, must not allow itself to be deprived of the sumptuous robes of external analogies; for the essential character of symbolic art is never to reach the Idea itself. Accordingly, in this art, the depictions of nature, the actions of human beings, all the concrete phenomena would not manifest

²¹ Clowney and Suther, *Obey, 3 More Plays*, 116.

themselves; these are but appearances perceptible to the senses destined to represent their esoteric affinities with primordial ideas.²²

Moréas' version of symbolism rejects all attempts to represent the perceptible world directly or instruct the reader straightforwardly. Instead, he advocates allusive language that will allow the idea to be intuited by readers through a series of analogies. Moréas makes clear that for symbolism the important subject matter lies beyond the perceptible world. In addition, in the manifesto, Moréas advocates new kinds of verse no longer bound by traditional rules of poetic composition.²³

Moréas' manifesto served many purposes. On the one hand, it was a declaration of the direction modern poetry should take and thus part of a wider attempt on the part of young writers to find cultural legitimacy while declaring themselves outside the traditional French academy. This general trend toward establishing an independent literary milieu is perhaps most clearly evidenced in the plethora of literary magazines that emerged in the mid-1880s: *Le Symboliste*, *La Vogue*, *Le Scapin*, *La Décadence*, and *Le Décadent*. Some, such as *La vogue*, sought legitimacy as serious journals by publishing new works by young poets such as Gustave Kahn, Jean Moréas, René Ghil, and Édouard Dujardin alongside the work of already established symbolist heroes such as Mallarmé and Rimbaud. These small journals also published articles further formulating and often arguing the points of symbolist theory. Many journals founded in the 1880s and early 1890s were short-lived, some lasting less than a year. Some journals, however, such as *La*

²² Jean Moréas, *A Literary Manifesto-Symbolism* 1886 in Henri Dorra, *Symbolist Art Theories-A Critical Anthology* (London: The Art Book Endowment Fund of the Associates University of California Press, 1994), 60.

²³ <http://Science-jrank.org/Pages/11376/Symbolism-Symbolism-in-French-Literature.html> "Symbolism-Symbolism in French Literature"

Revue indépendante, *La Plume*, and *Les entretiens politiques et littéraires* had more successful runs, and one, *Le Mercure de France*, still exists, though its aims have been considerably broadened since the original publication.²⁴

While in some sense declaring his independence from tradition, Moréas also wanted to distinguish what he called "Symbolism" from the approach of other nontraditional writers and artists he designated as "Decadent." In 1883, Paul Bourget had expounded a "theory of decadence" when discussing Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867) in his *Essai de psychologie contemporaine* (Essay on contemporary psychology). Baudelaire's figure of the hypersensitive dandy aesthete became the model for the decadent artists, and Joris-Karl Huysmans's novel *À rebours* (1884; Against nature) became a veritable handbook: The main character, Des Esseintes, became a fictional cult hero and model for aspiring decadent artists and writers.

Conversely, symbolism, while sometimes overlapping in subject matter, is more seriously concerned with the search for a new approach to poetic, literary, or artistic form drawing on the experimentations of an older generation of writers such as Baudelaire, Edgar Allan Poe, Mallarmé, Rimbaud, and Verlaine. Moréas' description of symbolism refers most directly to Baudelaire's poem "Correspondences" from his volume *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857). The new approach to literary poetics Obey found was building a play around the character Joan without a physical representation by a character. *Les Fleurs du mal* became a touchstone for symbolist artists and writers. *La Fenêtre* suggests as *Les Fleurs du mal* that humans inhabit a world where the mundane can serve as a "forest of symbols" to which the poet is specially attuned. The poem evokes two ideas that will be central to symbolism: first, the role of the artist or poet as a gifted seer capable of

²⁴ Ibid.

identifying connections that point beyond the perceptible world; and second, the importance of formal echoes in sensory data where scents, colors, and sounds "se répondent" (respond to one another) in synesthesia—the connection between different sensory realms.

According to Mallarmé:

to name an object is to suppress three quarters of the pleasure of the poem which is meant to be deciphered little by little: suggestion, that is the dream. This is the perfect use of mystery which constitutes the symbol: to evoke an object little by little in order to show a state of the soul or, conversely, to choose an object and glean from it an emotional state by a series of decipherments (1891 response to Jules Huret, *Enquête sur l'évolution littéraire*).²⁵

As this passage suggests, the purpose of a poem is not to put forth a clearly decipherable message about the exterior world or the intentions of the writer, but to set in motion a process of reading. The word on the page always points beyond itself or its obvious referents to an unknown that cannot be fixed. Mallarmé's works place the emphasis on language's material unfolding through the poem, and the reader's unending act of decipherment is not a sign of the poem's failure but of its success.²⁶

The story of symbolism was one of the thousand controversies in French literature. Obey positions himself between neoclassicism and Moréas' advocacies of using allusive language to allow the idea to be intuited by readers through a series of analogies. Obey was successful to that extent by using a character as grandfather Thibaut. Grandfather Thibaut, because of his handicap (blind), uses a great deal of sixth sense to control the plot of the play. Although the execution of Joan serves as background in *La Fenêtre*, it is

²⁵ C. F. MacIntyre, trans. *French Symbolist Poetry* (University of California Press, 1966), 155-162.

²⁶ Ibid.

the effect of this crime on the Thibaut family which Obey emphasizes. He uses a symbolized unity, strength, determination and hope which emerge from the tragedy.

For the most part, patriotism is a quality which Obey's characters have either to a great extent (Joan of Arc, Old Thibaut, the two sons who die in the war) or to a lesser extent (*Les Trois Coups de minuit*) or the near-miss of a selfish lover to commit a perfect crime (*La Souriante Madame Beudet*). Consequently, those who are willing to die for their country die alone. This abandonment of the patriot is expressed by Catherine in *La Fenêtre*:

Tous ces gens le (le spectacle) regardent et personne ne dit mot!
Personne ne dit mot. Il y a là trois cents, même pas, deux cents Gordons (English)
Et nous sommes dix mille. Si ces dix mille faisaient un pas, un seul pas en avant,
Les deux cents Gordons seraient noyés, d'un seul coup submergés!

Mais personne ne bouge. Tout le monde la regarde souffrir, tout le monde la regarde mourir, enchaînée à ce Poteau comme une bête féroce. Tout
Le monde trouve ça normal, tout le monde trouve ça bien! Mais qu'est-ce qui se passe;

Est-ce le monde à l'envers?
Personne n'est venu. Personne ne viendra. Personne!
(S)es soldats...ceux d'Orléans, de Reims, les soldats des beaux jours. Où sont-ils?
Qu'est-ce qu'ils font? Et ses vieux compagnons, La Hire, Dunois, les autres, qu'est-ce qu'ils font, eux aussi?

Et le roi? Le roi de France? Un homme qui lui doit tout, tout, de la tête aux pieds, de sa couronne d'or à ses éperons de fer, qu'est-ce qu'il fait, le roi de France? Il joue aux cartes? ...Et ses Saints? Et ses saints Michel et Marguerite, et Catherine, ma patronne, qui étaient si bavards dans le ciel de Lorraine, la Normandie leur donne une extinction de voix?... Et Dieu ... Dieu regarde tout ça du haut de son balcon? Comme nous?C'est incroyable.²⁷

Rousseau in *The Social Contract* describes the difference between Rousseau and his idea of nationalism and his contemporaries (which he denounced so strongly): the major difference between Rousseau and the contemporary moralists that he excoriated was that

²⁷ Clowney, diss. University of Missouri, 1968, 103.

in rejecting a natural harmony of selfish interests, Rousseau nonetheless retained a staunch conviction that there are such things as *true common interests*.²⁸

However, there exists a horrible gap between actual common interests and what people do in reality. To bridge this gap, the social pact is needed. Jean-Jacques Rousseau advised:---public must be created to give substance to the common interest, and each member of that public must be taught to will his own good within that public good. The social contract will make men into citizens, willing to give up their lives for the nation, willing to obey the general will (which is what the social pact is all about): This deliberate inducement of passionate intoxication, this highly artificial excitement and exaggeration of natural sentiments, is employed to train men to be citizens--that is, to make them able to will together the good they see as individuals. That is the social lie-- a lie embedded in nationalism. The same is true in Obey's *La Fenêtre*. Obey was deployed twice and each time he was wounded; that is great proof of patriotism. The ambivalence in Obey is due to the fact that the weight of the noble lie and the social lie are intertwined in *La Fenêtre* and Obey could not separate the two. Patriotism is the most dangerous social cancer that Obey attempts to entertain in the plot.

Patriotism

Patriotism makes a significant appearance in at least four of Obey's plays and one adaptation, said Clowney.²⁹ For the most part it is expressed in the form of citizens' readiness to devote themselves totally to the honor and/or salvation of the country,

²⁸ Arash Abizaded, *Political Theory on Rhetoric: Banishing the Particular-Rousseau on Rhetoric, Patrie and Passions*. 29-4: 556-82.

²⁹ Clowney, diss., University of Missouri, 1968, 101.

whether it means self-sacrifice, defeat, or family disunity. Since such demands are more acute during national crises, the plays in this group are primarily laid against a background of war.

La Bataille de la Marne, the first work in which the theme appears, shows through allegory the various segments of society responding to national emergency. The drama achieves new significance when we consider the heroism of the ill-prepared France trying to withstand the powerful German invasion, thus showing that love for our country spurs us to fight the opposition in spite of insurmountable odds. This play is also unique in that it links patriotism to religion, hinting that the strength of patriotism comes from its being rooted in religious beliefs.³⁰

In Huit Cents Mètres patriotism is seen as a desire to bring glory and distinction to the fatherland. So desperately does Jean want a French victory in the Olympic contests that he even considers cheating to get it. Although the runner does not cheat, he does lose the race. Nevertheless, the play draws its real meaning from the fact that Jean brings honor to his country by the sportsmanship he displays at his loss.

Revenu de l'Etoile and *La Fenêtre* showS patriotism as emerging from peasant class to national prominence. However, the characters who gain national distinction are not emphasized as much as are those who survive them. *Revenu de l'Etoile* shows how a mother sacrifices two sons to France in World War I without ever knowing that one of them has achieved immortality as the unknown soldier. The work reaches an ironically poignant note when the mother feels that France has given nothing in exchange for her sons:

³⁰ Jean-Louis Barrault, *Nouvelles réflexions sur le théâtre* (Paris: Flammarion, 1959), 34.

Mes deux garçons ont . . . disparu.
 Mais qu'est-ce qu'ils font donc des garçons, dites,
 Là-bas? Qu'est-ce qu'ils en font
 On les leur donne . . . on les leur donne, et puis
 et puis, ils vous rendent . . . rien!³¹

Although the execution of Joan of Arc serves as background in *La Fenêtre*, it is the effect of this crime on the Thibaut family which Obey emphasizes, thus using it to symbolize the new unity, strength, determination and hope which emerge from the tragedy. The resounding echo of Obey's plays is the desire for peace, not only between individuals but also between nations. His experience as soldier is probably largely responsible for his preoccupation with peace, he may well have reached that conviction simply by observing the condition of the world at war in the twentieth century.

In conclusion, neoclassicism is the refusal to follow the evolution of the history of literature. That is the charm of Obey's plays as well as any other neoclassical theater. They remind the reader of the neoclassicism school of thought Clowney and Suther called "Myth exists to be reborn" in talking about Obey. Sometime his plays lack a protagonist such as: *La Bataille de la Marne*, *Noah*, *Introduction au Cid*, they still hold the reader's interest to climax.

With the conscience of history, the writer cannot help seeing the divine intervention as unrealistic. The reader can perceive the intervention of an invisible hand as mockery and relevant to children's story books. Man ceases to be entertained by the neoclassical way when society demands that theater be more relevant to the life of the theatergoers. Since then, theater has become more realistic as values change. Obstructing art as an experience, John F. Dewey (father of pragmatism in America) does not agree that morality can be the sole rule given for art education. Obey was supposed to take a firm

³¹ Ibid.

stand against French *Rationalism*. This action would have elevated *La Fenêtre* to the rank of George Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan*. Aristotle in his *Poetics* writes that: "there is not the same kind of correctness in poetry as in politics, or indeed in any other art."³²

John Dewey believed that the final determining element of art production was its aesthetic quality. The grandfather of philosophy, Plato, never pretended that art could be a model of moral function for the obvious reason that art handles the particular and not the universal. In book ten of the *Republic* he implies that some art always has a particular place, event, person, color or theme it wants to create when it tackles the appearance of an 'object' X in an angled and individually treated manner. Teaching art involves quintessentially how the artwork looks and how it is to be performed. When working with the appearance, the student gains local knowledge of his 'object' by forming impressions of it that oscillate with its mode of production. Dealing only with the way things appear and the fact that appearances are variable is not the best way to understand morality.

³² S. H. Butcher trans. *Aristotle's Poetics* (N.Y.: Witch Books, 2011), 23-37.

CHAPTER 5

JEAN ANOUILH'S LIFE AND WORKS

Jean Anouilh was born June 23, 1910, in Bordeaux, France. He owes his artistic gift to his parents: his mother a violin teacher and his father a tailor. Anouilh at a very young age was exposed to the craftsmanship of his parents. At the age of 18, Anouilh saw Jean Giraudoux's drama *Siegfried*, in which he discovered a theatrical and poetic language that determined his career. Anouilh became one of the strongest personalities of France's theater and achieved an international reputation. His plays are intensely personal and temporal messages, because he said, life is wonderful and one must live it.¹

Anouilh rejected the naturalist and realist theater in favor of what has been called *Theatricalism* that marked the return of poetry and imagination to the stage. He showed great versatility in the style used from the *Comédie-ballet*, to the modern comedy of character. Although he is not a systematic existentialist like Jean-Paul Sartre, his leading characters have the tendency toward existentialism. Anouilh developed his own approach to life, highlighting the contradictions within human reality--for example, the ambiguous relationships between good and evil. His dramatic vision of the world poses the question of how far the individual must compromise with the truth to obtain happiness. His plays show men and women facing the loss of the privileged world of childhood. Some of his characters accept the inevitable, such as: *Antigone* (1944),

¹Anouilh's quote: *La vie est belle, il faut la vivre*. Anouilh quote <http://www.famousquotes.com>.

Jeanne d'Arc in *L'Alouette* (1953), *Médée* (1946), etc. Some live lies such as *Le Bal des Voleurs* (1938) (*Thieves' Carnival*), and other such as *Antigone* (1944), reject any tampering with ideals. The mood of Anouilh's plays became more sombre, with *L'invitation au Chateau* (1947), *The Ring Around the Moon*; in *La Valse des Toréadors* (1952) his aging couples seem to perform a dance of death. *L'Alouette* (1953) (*The Lark*) is the spiritual adventure of Joan of Arc, who like Antigone and Therese Tarde in *La Sauvage* are Anouilh's rebels who reject the world, its order and its trite happiness. Honor and friendship are crushed between spiritual integrity and political power in *Becket ou l'Honneur de Dieu* (*Becket, or The Honor of God*, 1958).

In the 1950s Anouilh introduced into his vision of the world the novelty of political ferment: *Pauvre Bitos, ou le Dîner de têtes* 1956 (*Poor Bitos*). In the 1960s his plays were considered by many to be Absurdist dramas compared to those of Eugène Ionesco or Samuel Beckett.² To understand Anouilh is to look into his life to see the shy boy whose life unfolds to become national, international and successful playwright.

Frenchmen of Anouilh's literary generation were ruled by one dictatorship and four different forms of government.³ Each of those historical changes resulted by opposing not the good to the wicked or the rightist to the leftist, but it opposed some living beings who were killed then between the naives, the displeased people and the snatches (combinards) who switched sides to benefit the victory. Anouilh's early life influenced the formation of his heroes. The plots of Anouilh's plays stem from psycho-sociological factors; Anouilh belonged to the generation of youth raised during World War I, and

² Ionesco and Anouilh were confronted with the same social concerns; their re-enactment in plays were alike.

³ Claude Puzin, *Littérature Textes et Documents* (Paris: Collection Henri Mitterand, 1987), 7.

having known poverty in his childhood, he was to remember its effects.⁴ That is the source of inspiration for his bitter and dismal *pièces noires*.

French society during the years 1914-1918 was composed mainly of women and priests. Children were exposed to a twofold experience which stressed on the one hand affection and sensitivity, on the other humility and inaction. Besides feeling the absence of comradeship provided by ideal father-son relationships, the World War I generation of children was also deprived of close-at-hand "father images"--energetic, strong-willed men whose example could be followed. This experience may account for the fact that Anouilh's heroes and heroines are physically weak and womanish.⁵

Modeled in softness, both Anouilh's male and female characters are aware of their yet unalterable effeminate delicacy. The General, a misnamed character in several of Anouilh's plays, would like to be strong and virile, to be able to stand up to society's bullies; Joan of Arc in *L'Alouette* would be too content to have been born a man so that she might mount her horse and lead Frenchmen into battle with more decorum; Medea laments:

O sun...why did you make me girl? Why these breasts, this weakness?...Would not a male Medea have been handsome? Would he not have been strong? A body hard as stone ... firm, intact, unbroken.... Woman! Woman! Bitch! Flesh made of a little clay and the rib of man! A scrap of man!⁶

The physical weakness of Anouilh's heroes is in sharp contrast to their strength of character, and this polarity produces within them a conflict which isolates them and renders them what society calls "maladjusted" individuals. They are doubly

⁴ Alba D. Fazia, *The Life and Times of Jean Anouilh* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1963), 18.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Jean Anouilh, *Médée* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1946), 18. Medea struggles between existing as a tool--a puppet of the gods.

handicapped: by physical weakness and by shame at their poverty---both of which condemn them to solitude. In this respect, they are an incarnation of the author's own youth.⁷ In spite of this infantile predisposition to poverty and psychologically deprived of human closeness, Anouilh acquired a true sense of the stage by sitting unobtrusively in the casino listening to the operettas of his mother hired as a violinist of the resort orchestra.⁸

Anouilh learned firsthand that history was not an easy subject to write about objectively. His experience with *La Foire d'empoigne* that, he called Melodrama was not well received even though the play was approved by the reading committee of La Comédie Française. *La Foire d'empoigne* was about the political struggle during the Fourth Republic, it was not staged.

After reading almost fifteen of Anouilh's plays, one still can not easily assign to his plays a specific school of thought. However, when one takes into account his background, the ingenuity of his messages in his plays, one can say with certitude that some of his plays like *L'Alouette* or, *Antigone* were written to revive France's spirit of resistance and the political ascension of the Fifth Republic. Anouilh chose "l'alouette" because it was the symbol of French ancestry (Gaulois) as the national bird for its great heart and songs but poorly dressed (Michelet).⁹ He played the psychotherapist as Stendhal in *The Red and the Black*. According to Peter France, Anouilh's interest in Joan of Arc, was not surprising. He underscored this claim about Anouilh by his membership

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Anouilh's bibliography – Jean Anouilh- wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.
en.wikipedia.org/jean_anouilh.

⁹ Jules Michelet and Charles Moraze, *Introduction à l'Histoire Universelle. Préface à l'Histoire de France* (Paris: A. Collin, 1962), 20.

in the existentialist movement that emerged during World War II. Jean-Paul Sartre was the most influential writer of the existentialist movement in France. Anouilh participated in the movement with Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus, and Eugène Ionesco, among many others. The essential tenet of the existentialist philosophy is that a person's existence and identity are realized by making choices and taking responsibility for one's actions. The protagonists of three of Anouilh's most famous plays are existentialist heroes: *Antigone* (1942) said "To say yes, you have to sweat and roll up your sleeves and plunge both hands into life up to the elbows. It is easy to say no, even if it means dying."¹⁰ Beckett (1959-60) "Until the day of his death, no man can be sure of his courage."¹¹ In the Introduction of *L'Alouette* Anouilh declares: "Mystère de Jeanne," that the play is not an explication of the *mystery* of Joan of Arc. He notes that Joan was not recognized as a martyr, but as a saint who was canonized for her virtue, her actions, and not for her faith: "Le jeu de théâtre que l'on voit n'apporte rien à l'explication du mystère de Jeanne. . . Elle a été canonisée pour l'excellence de ses vertues théologiques et non parce qu'elle est morte pour sa foi".¹²

To understand Jean Anouilh one needs to go back, and look into the evolution of the European values due to societal changes. Changes caused many societal shifts, from the agricultural to the industrial era, and the social mobility after the French Revolution were the highlights of these social changes. This paradigm shift influences every aspect of Western civilization:

¹⁰ Alda Della Fazio, *The Life and Times of Jean Anouilh* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1963), 22.

¹¹ Critical Essay by Leonard C. Pronko, "Jean Anouilh Literature Criticism." Beckett is not outspoken against life like *Antigone*.

¹² Jean Anouilh, *L'Alouette* (Paris: Ed. De La Table Ronde, 1953), 2.

The literary world evolved from the entertaining function to militantism. The theater ceased to portray its protagonists as heroes with model character principles (Racine's projection in his plays): responsibility, fidelity, compassion fidelity, courage, to change toward cult-oriented personality or toward the individual defined by his material acquisition, and intellectual techniques to acquire wealth. As we would say from to be to seem to be. The changes emphasized generation, religious and gender conflicts. After the *French the Revolution*, individuality was taken to a higher degree with the ascension of diverse philosophical currents (Marxist, Existentialist) that were engaged in the struggle of the Reconstruction era. Each of the self-fulfilling philosophical thoughts was very engaging in the spirit of French revolution and of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. It happens that Existentialism was the current that comes closer to the French Resistance during the French Revolution, the reconstruction era and the Fourth Republic. History passes on to Anouilh the neoclassist form of literature.¹³

Anouilh belongs to the generation of playwrights called neoclassical; because they were influenced by the style and methodology of writing of the classics but under the current pressure of their time, they chose to actualize the classical inspiration of theater-- (Theater of Boulevard) to make their theater relevant to the people's aspirations-- just as George Bernard Shaw's plays changed course under the influence of Ibsen. The theater must change the theatergoers said Henrik Ibsen.¹⁴ Anouilh's generation was under a great deal of pressure from these societal forces, which exercised much influence on Anouilh's playwrighting and drove him to the type of writers who were loosely called writers of the

¹³ *Antigone*'s themes and those of *L'Alouette*, to a lesser extent, carry the dominant French ideology of that era.

¹⁴ James McFarlane et al., trans. *The Oxford Ibsen Collections*, 8 vols. (London: James McFarlane Edition, 1960-77), 185.

théâtre de Boulevard. One of those influences was his adoption of the symbolist approach, that compels the readers to double interpretation because the symbolist makes reference to another thing while writing about another. For example Anouilh referred to l'alouette (the lark), the national bird and symbol of courage in the time of the Gaulois to illustrate the struggle of Joan of Arc.¹⁵

In the Critical Review, Harold Clurman in *Nation*, said:

Anouilh is a romantic idealist whose idealism plagues him. He yearns for purity, nobility, moral courage, glory, but discerns little but pettiness, chicanery, deception and vice. Life riles him because it is not consistent; he abhors the bulk of humanity because it professes virtues it does not practice. There is something comic in this and a sentimentalist becomes bitter because everything he beholds, everything that has happened to him since he first conceived of the loveliness of experience – especially in matters of love—has proved false and vain.¹⁶

In the following review, Clurman gives a mixed assessment of the 1973 New York production of *The Waltz of the Toreadors*, deeming the drama "the play which reveals most of Anouilh's essential traits in perfect balance."¹⁷

If it were not so, he said:

Anouilh's plays seem to wail—beauty not despoiled, grandeur not debased, purity not debauched. But since it is so, we must make the best of it in humankind's shabby fashion, bedecking ourselves in social courtesies, official pomp and at best in common-sense compromise. Once in a long while some splendid gesture or leap of the soul, like a lark in the sky, momentarily redeems us. . . . This makes Anouilh both conservative and a cynic. He will not budge from his safe position—'again' everything except the deal. He endures life with a grimace of disgust, a salty chuckle, an ache of regret, and above all with sharp-edged *practical shrewdness*. The latter feature produces his formidable stage craftsmanship.¹⁸

¹⁵ Anouilh gave a free judgment to the government of Vichy in *L'Alouette*.

¹⁶ Harold Clurman, "Theater" *Nation* (New York: Review of Living Theater. *Nation* 207, no. 14 (28 October, 1968), 467.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Paul William Wood's dissertation states that the development of Anouilh's themes makes possible to divide his plays into several periods, based upon fundamental similarities among the plays of the various groups.¹⁹ The plays of the first group--those written during the thirties--stress the plight of man trying to escape from his past, sometimes succeeding but more often than not, failing.²⁰ The real drama of *L'hermine*, as in every one of Anouilh's serious plays, lies in the conflict between the hero's inner world and the exterior world he faces. The latter imposes upon him certain conditions that he feels are diametrically opposed to the person he considers himself to be.²¹

Based on this assumption which said that: Anouilh's view of life and man's place in the universe has remained essentially unchanged throughout his career. The later plays clarify and elaborate upon ideas presented in the early ones. To be sure, there is a certain development and a shift in focus as the author matures, but it is noteworthy that Anouilh's basic concepts are present from the beginning and have not changed fundamentally in the course of almost thirty years. If this has led to some degree of repetition, it is to be regretted, but that very repetition tends to give a certain unity to Anouilh's theater. He has developed what is called a personal mythology, composed of characters, situations, and language which are peculiar to his world and reflect effectively his view of life.

In *Le Bal des Voleurs* (1932), *Le Rendez-Vous de Senlis* (1937), and *Léocadia* (1939), all *Pièces roses*, we see one or more of the protagonists escaping, to some degree

¹⁹ Paul William Wood, *Comparative Study of Jean Anouilh and Moliere: The Development of Thought, Character, and Techniques in Anouilh's Theatre considered in Relation to Molière*. Diss. Northwestern University, 1970 (214-219). <http://www.researchgate.net/publication/338>.

²⁰ Clurman, 354-55.

²¹ Ibid.

at least, from the past and also from the present. Their only means of escape, however, is flight into a world of fancy created in each instance by the characters involved, or made possible by the circumstances. The *Pièces roses* in themselves neither assure us that one can successfully escape from reality for any length of time, nor do they tell us the contrary: that man can not escape. However, when placed beside the *Pièce noires*, with which they are contemporaneous, the fugacity of such a solution becomes apparent, for we can see that dreams in which the characters lose themselves are not a valid answer to the problems with which we have seen them confronted in the *Pièces noires*. One might even wonder whether Anouilh has not sought to satirize in the 'rosy' plays those facile writers of entertainment who treat the problems of life in a superficial way.²²

If the characters of the *Pièces roses* are unheroic in their compromise with happiness and their refusal to accept life as it is, they at least possess the noble desire for the purity of life that dares to be what it is without excuses. Nevertheless they are satisfied with a happiness that Anouilh later satirizes as illusory and unworthwhile.²³ The dramatic conflict in these plays of the first period, from *L'hermine* to *Léocadia*, is between the hero's inner image of what he most believes to be, and the environment and past that impose upon him a character that is at variance with his imagined "true self." The struggle for freedom ensues, and the hero inevitably returns to his former misery, or at any rate, does not deny it or forget it, for to do so would be to become untrue to a part of himself. The power of one's environment and past is so strong that it pulls apart those who under other circumstances might have had some chance for happiness together. The

²² Harold Clurman, *The Collection of Harold Clurman: Six Decades of Commentary on Theater, Dance, Music, Film, Arts and Letters* (N.Y.: Marjorie Loggia & Glenn Young Edition, 1994), 332-35.

²³ *Ibid.*, 333.

opposition between environments is usually made in terms of wealth and poverty. In all these plays, wealth means happiness, but a happiness at the expense of insensitivity to the suffering of others, for the wealthy have been protected from real life, and know nothing but the surfaces.²⁴

Although the hero is not clearly defined yet in the plays of his first period, but the hero established as the person who is opposed to the compromises of life, whose first purpose is the quest for purity through fidelity to what he considers his truest self. This purity is usually expressed in terms of childhood--that period of freedom and spontaneity, before we learned the game of pretense and hypocrisy. It is another version of the Garden of Eden, Baudelaire's green paradise which represents a positive value of the past. The hero would like to cling tenaciously to the purity represented by such a vision, and consequently he tends to reject the adult world. Throughout the plays of Anouilh we hear of the hero refusing to grow up, or regretting his lost childhood. Unfortunately, this innocent paradise is not our past. Superimposed upon it is the miserable past of man afflicted with sin, represented in most instances by the intolerable world of the poor. The hero attempts to escape from the latter and to return to the former.²⁵

When the protagonist goes beyond the limits of his role, forgetting his past, as do Gaston and the characters of the *Pièces roses*, we feel he is not being true to all the aspects of his being, which includes his past as well as his aspirations in the present. The protagonists of *Pièces roses*, are not of a heroic stature. They are not like those who,

²⁴ Ibid. 334.

²⁵ Pronko, 18-19.

refusing to escape into a world of dreams, face reality as it is, at the same time denouncing it and remaining aware of its limitations.²⁶

Anouilh's next four plays lay more stress upon the author's fundamental ideas than had his previous plays. *Eurydice* (1941), *Antigone* (1942), *Roméo et Jeannette* (1945), and *Médée* (1946) place the heroic individual in the center of the stage as he faces reality and says no to it. The feeling of death is everpresent, and every one of the heroines goes down morally victorious. The central struggle is no longer between the protagonist's past and his aspirations. It has shifted to something more universal: the inner world versus the entire outer world, which is the only one recognized by society. The revolt against the past is only part of a larger revolt, and in *Antigone* creates itself only in the present. The realities of existence were not in sight so *Médée* and *Antigone* chose to depart from the selfish surrounding world.²⁷

Eurydice (1941) still shows some preoccupation with the escape from a sordid past, and in this respect it belongs to Anouilh's first period. Insofar as this escape is only a part of a larger refusal of the compromises of life, and insofar as *Eurydice* treats with greater emphasis and clarity the essential notions only suggested in the first group of plays--enlarging upon them and imbuing them with a new universality--it belongs to the second period because *Eurydice* chose death.²⁸ *Eurydice* shows, as does *La sauvage*, that man can not successfully escape from his past. This theme is expressed much more clearly and forcefully in the later play. The past includes not only the persons and

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ *The French Review*, Vol. 79 (American Association of Teachers of French, 1927- 2005), 265-508.

²⁸ Ibid.

circumstances with which man has had dealings, but all past events—even those that seemed alien. The stranger that one happened to look at from a distance leaves an indelible imprint, because one can not help reacting to even the most objective stimuli.²⁹

In *Antigone* (1942) there is no past weighing upon the heroine: she has chosen her role. As she tells her sister Ismène: "You chose life, and I death."³⁰ Indeed, Antigone goes to her death, thinking it is the only answer that one can give to life if one is to remain true to oneself. She represents the universe of childhood—the kingdom of the ideal judged through subjectively chosen values. Her revolt is gratuitous; without direction; unmotivated in terms of a past. Her action arises only from a deep felt necessity to become what she believes to be her truest self.³¹

Antigone's refusal of happiness is also her refusal of life, for the two terms are equaled. "I want to know how I will go about it, to be happy also,"³² she cries out to Créon. "You say that life is so beautiful. I want to know how I will go about it, to live." This statement is no refusal of reality: it is a refusal of life itself. If such a refusal is negative, with no positive values implied, it is because Antigone sees life in such terms that a positive stand has no meaning. If life is a compromise and the evil is to wish to live, then Antigone may assert her freedom by choosing death. All those who make the compromise are no longer free in Anouilh's world, despite the strength of their will or the power of their intellect.³³

²⁹ Fazio, *Jean Anouilh*, 23-25.

³⁰ Jean Anouilh, *Antigone* (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1951), 20.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 24-25.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

The conflict in *Roméo et Jeannet* is between the concepts of the virtuous bourgeois, who believe one must grow up one day and accept the fact that life is not so beautiful as one had thought as a child, and the absolute refusal of Jeannette to accept life on such terms. "I don't want to grow up. I want to learn to say yes. Everything is too ugly," she says, reminding us of Antigone.³⁴

Antigone, *Roméo et Jeannet*, and *Médée* show the same conflict between the hero's or the heroine's aspirations and the world of compromise that they must face and in contact with which they would become sullied. Antigone, Jeannette and Médée, like Orphée, say no to life and realize themselves victoriously in death. Their morality is one of completeness, and they must remain faithful to the inner self by answering spontaneously the imperious demands of the 'savage' individual. Contrasted to them are the mediocre people who consent to play the game, and who seek happiness by hiding the truth of life's absurdity from themselves. Lacking the necessary intelligence to perceive any facet of the truth, they simply vegetate, saying, like Monsieur Delachaume in *Le rendez-vous de Senlis*: Money and love: what else can you ask for? Life is simple after all, for God's sake. In varying degrees this simple, pleasant picture of life is opposed to the nothingness that the hero sees behind the illusion.³⁵

The playwright's interest is no longer centered on the personage as he encounters life with its compromises. He now directs his attention to the mediocre people who have accepted life. Sometimes, as in *La répétition*, he shows what a change is effected in the life of a member of the lower race when the real world is revealed to him by a member of

³⁴ Ibid., 29.

³⁵ Existentialism is the ideal philosophy of Anouilh's heroes.

the heroic race. Most often, however, the unheroic claims the center of the stage. Rather than contrasting those who accept life with those who refuse it, these 'brilliant' plays and 'grating' plays oppose the innocent and sincere to the wicked and cruel sometimes unwittingly. The pathetic struggles of the few good characters, almost lost amid the others, give rise to a deep feeling of despair in their behalf, for one realizes that the cards are stacked against them. This pessimistic attitude constitutes a profound criticism of the adult characters who have lost the purity of childhood.³⁶

Anouilh's heroes gave some semblance of meaning to life by making it the means through which they realized themselves, by their very refusal of it. We can find no hole in the fabric of an absurd universe through which to bring in some meaning.³⁷ The reader's suspicion that Anouilh's heroes are arrogant nihilists, is justified by their lack of faith in humanity a system that overlooks those elements of man's constitution which are capable of saving him from himself. The weakness and immorality of the characters seems to point to the conclusion that man is not worth saving.

In *Becket ou L'honneur de Dieu* (1959) Anouilh returns to the intransigent characters, but presents a more mature and positive hero than any of the earlier ones. Although *Becket* recalls Antigone in his intractable attitude before the King, he strikes us at once as being more mature and more logical. For Becket is not revolting in a vacuum, and he is not reduced to admitting that he is acting for himself, he is defending a positive value-the honor of God-and he stands for "the unwritten law which always bends the

³⁶ Pronko, 40-41.

³⁷ Marguerite Archer, *Jean Anouilh* (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1971), 56-57.

heads of kings at last."³⁸ We begin to suspect that Becket is more like Antigone than is at first apparent. Although he may lack her childish arrogance, he may very well share her 'nihilism,' for God's honor turns out to be another way of expressing the heroic desire for an impossible absolute. Becket's 'no' is not spoken against life; unlike Antigone's, it does not represent the will to refuse. It has a more positive side: it is spoken against compromise, and in favor of a value (God, the Church) which, however incomprehensible it may be as an absolute, does have a meaning in human terms. In this sense, Becket is more profoundly human than Antigone or Jeannette. He does not go toward death with their eagerness, scoring 'filthy hope' and happiness. He accepts death because it is a necessary part of his role.³⁹

Thus, to understand Jean Anouilh, his success and his flaws, one has to consider the determinant factors of his beloved France and his own evolution:

French History imbued every Frenchman with a resiliency to a submission. As Pierre Challenger said, if you want a Frenchman's opinion, he will give it to you without questioning your motive. Because *La déclaration du droit de l'homme et du citoyen* of 1789 gave an inalienable right of freedom to every Frenchman. Anouilh exercises in his plays that freedom and extends it to his protagonists. Two arguments favor his endeavor:

1 – Anouilh is French

2 – He is a playwright

The recurrency in his plays of resilient protagonists is personal to Anouilh. He is being Ibsenian without admitting it. He can also be interpreted as a condescending treatment of the theatergoers. By writing many plays with the same plot as reminder to the theater-

³⁸ Ibid., 60.

³⁹ Ibid.

goers, he indicates it is not a shameful to die for a cause you believe in. It is most of the time understood as a personal mission to want to show one's countrymen their unfortunate tendency to repeat past mistakes. Anouilh drew a parallel to the French Revolution when Robespierre decreed 'the cult of the supreme being' and also the chaos of the Fourth République. As he advised as classification of his *œuvres*, the *nouvelles pièces noires* are closely related to the original *pièces noires*. All these plays together form a progression, with each having a larger degree of impact. In *L'Hermine*, *La sauvage*, and *Le voyageur sans bagage*, the prime origin of the facts rests in the inflexibility of the characters in their polarization. Each play mixes the elements of choice and alienation; each plot develops within a small social setting, except *Antigone*, which widens to include the political circle.

Marguerite Archer gives us a clear understanding of Anouilh's plays in the following terms:

The controversies which rise about Jean Anouilh's plays stems from the fact that he escapes clear-cut identification. This is due not to obscurity in his *œuvres* or deviousness on his part but simply to the Protean aspect of his plays. They are variations on given themes, and as such they give the impression that they constitute contradictions. But it is simply a fact of life that ambiguity is an integral component of man's plight in relation to himself and others, thus to ask that an image of man be in clear and ambiguous focus is to ask for confronting falsehood. Besides, if man is a 'disconsolate but gay animal,' as Anouilh asserts, won't he be a paradox to himself? ⁴⁰

Anouilh's works are hard to be grouped under one heading and given a coherent analysis. By isolating them as he suggested under the headings of *Pièces noires*, *nouvelles pièces noires*, *Pièces roses*, *Pièces brillantes*, *Pièces grinçantes* and *Pièces costumées*, one can give evidence of his own characteristics of playwright and reveals by a particular play Anouilh's mission.

⁴⁰ Marguerite Archer, *Jean Anouilh, Literature Criticism Essay*. 12-13.

In addition, according to their heredity, their history of poverty, wealth, pain or pleasure, men are divided into two races which cannot communicate: as Charles Baudelaire expressed it, the race of Cain and the race of Abel. When the protagonists could be saved by redeemer-like characters who would graciously give of themselves to prevent their beloved's fate, they respond with a sardonic but melancholy refusal.

Archer continues:

As he developed the cycle of the *pièces noires*, Anouilh was accused of treating only one subject. Actually, these four plays constitute variations on the dilemma of life. As such, they tend to show the pride, the yearnings the frustration of certain characters rather to expose the definitive philosophy of the dramatist. At this point in his career the young playwright was primarily concerned with creation of characters, not with the growth of the plot, hence the enigmatic quality of the characters' rejection. From the debates the characters engage in, however, general trends of thought can be deduced, which Anouilh elaborates more fully in later plays. What mainly stands out in his earlier work is an interest in the complexity of man's motives of the difficulties of making a lucid choice in the chaotic modern world which pulls a man in opposite directions.⁴¹

As we look at the *Pièces noires* on the whole, it is clear that the same yearning for complete freedom and integrity drives all the protagonists to despair, although the circumstances vary. In Anouilh's vision, every sight, every touch, experience, every moment of time, leave their imprint on man's soul and preclude any rebirth of interior freshness, of innocence. Man seems to resemble a sheet of blotting paper which can never be cleaned of its spots, even though he wishes to regain his purity.

Anouilh created plays loosely depicting historical, actual, martyrdom and fictive events with his own fantasy. The historical accuracies were less important to him than his position about the subject of the events. He considered himself as an artist who creates plays as the carpenter creates and fashioned furnitures at his guise. Anouilh feels free to reject other people's values and to follow his own inner convictions-- a choice

⁴¹ Ibid.

which has resulted in a code of conventions that marked his antisocial, amoral, and negativistic propensities.

Anouilh's Philosophy

As Socrates did in Athens, Anouilh was self-appointed guide of the social and political life of Frenchmen. He refused to subscribe to one type of school of thought or philosophy, and this approach is a clever intellectual way to protect himself from the critics. Anouilh was in great part influenced by the social uncertainty of the future of France that was plagued by poverty in the period between World Wars. In the materialistic world, the lack of money creates insecurity in Anouilh, who was an intropective child. Thus, dedicated to the entertainment of popular audiences, Anouilh's early endeavors were a combination of melodrama and naturalism, that he called *the Pièces noires* with weak heroes or heroines. He embraced the commercial theater known as *Théâtre du Boulevard*. The oppressive weight of poverty was on Anouilh's shoulders, particularly with a wife and child to support, until Hollywood's purchase of the film rights for *Le Voyageur sans bagage* brought him sufficient funds for a home and a car. Anouilh's taste of financial success was bittersweet, however, for he considered himself first and foremost a dramatist and was unhappy about lending his characters to the cinema, even though the medium became an important source of income for him.⁴² He expresses his scorn of the movies through two of his characters in *Le Rendez-vous de Senlis*: the actor Philemon and the actress Madame de Montalembreuse, who refuse to play their assigned roles unless they receive assurances that the production is for the stage. Looking down their noses at the movies, they relegate to 'transatlantic talent'

⁴² Fazio, *Jean Anouilh*, 20.

(Hollywood) the medium that eliminates challenges and denies the true essence of the theater—the contact and vibrations between actors and audience.⁴³ Anouilh was torn between the new adventure of Hollywood and his ethics of the ‘théâtre de l’Art’ that he learned from Jacques Copeau. The first favors simple stage sets and highly synthesized production, but Anouilh’s release from poverty revealed a new facet of the playwright’s personality. He shifted from pessimistic (black) to a more optimistic (rosy) frame of reference during the years 1937-1939.⁴⁴ Three events of Anouilh’s life influenced his ethics and his social and political existence as well his countrymen’s. Their impacts were such they shaped Anouilh’s Ethics:

1. Growing up an environment of lack during the War World I.
2. The Nazi occupation of Paris.
3. His early marriage at 21.

The latter of the three events inflicted on Anouilh’s life an oppressive weight of poverty. Artistically, he shifted his plays from a pessimistic (black) to more optimistic (rosy) frame of the year of reference during the years 1937-1939.

The second event helped him with the collaboration of his friends: Paul Claudel, André Obey, Jean Cocteau to bring back into modern drama the poetry and imagination of the classical theater that had been stifled by realism, popular melodrama, and the vaudeville artifices of “*boulevardisme*.” The audiences were to be invited to dream

⁴³ Ibid., 20-21.

⁴⁴ Fazio, 21. Anouilh’s release from poverty, revealed a new facet of the playwright’s personality .

between the lines in a most personal way, while the *metteur en scène* would use all of the technical devices at his command to achieve a unified interpretation (symbolism).⁴⁵

The first event helped him to shape his heroes and same time source-of inspiration for his bitter and dismal *pièces noires* because his lacked of father-son relationships. These three events made Anouilh an introspective child with romantic tendencies, and this was accentuated by the anachronism of childhood days spent in an adult environment.⁴⁶

Aristotle sees ethical theory as a field distinct from the theoretical sciences. Its methodology must match its subject matter—good action—and must respect the fact that in this field many generalizations hold only for the most part. The objectives of the study of Ethics is to improve lives, and therefore its principal concern is the nature of human well-being. Aristotle follows Socrates and Plato in taking the virtues to be central to a well-lived life. Like Plato, he regards the ethical virtues (justice, courage, temperance and so on) as complex rational, emotional and social skills, but he rejects Plato's idea that a training in the sciences and metaphysics is a necessary prerequisite for a full understanding of our good. In order to live well, is a proper appreciation of the way in which such goods as friendship, pleasure, virtue, honor and wealth fit together as a whole. In order to apply that general understanding to particular cases, one must acquire, through proper upbringing and habits, the ability to see, on each occasion, which course of action is best supported by reasons. Therefore, practical wisdom, as one conceives it, cannot be acquired solely by learning general rules. One must also acquire, through practice, those deliberative, emotional, and social skills that enable us to put their general

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 18.

understanding of well-being into practice in ways that are suitable to each occasion.⁴⁷ The ideal and reality in the French Theater were looked upon by critics with amused condescension, ordinarily describing it as neoromantic and escapist, at best as an idealistic outlet for a disenchanted, pessimistic epoch and a sentimental and mildly cynical generation.⁴⁸ The characteristic of this opinion is the appraisal of Henri Peyre, who called in 1938 the French dramatists of that epoch “une génération d’inadaptés” dedicated to “evasion (par voyage, le mystère, le rêve) et attente.”⁴⁹ Anouilh lost himself in playwriting to fulfill his dream and became one of France's *opinionated* playwrights.

If Anouilh was introverted, evasive, turning down the artistic responsibility of the French stage director's union, but his pen did a great deal of talking for him to become the prolific French Playwright whose works ranged from high drama to absurdist farce. However, against Anouilh's belief, he utilized two schools of thought that he would use to re-enact his most successful plays: *Symbolism and Existentialism*. Using them interchangeably in one play or other to conceal what he was suggesting. Rene Marill Albérès in Pronko's critical Essay said: “In the theater of Anouilh we find characters who are often convincingly alive, and at the same time possess a symbolic meaning, which is called a ‘philosophical drama’; he went further to say:

Like other modern writers, Anouilh has given up painting human passion in order to paint the human condition. One might thus find in all his work that philosophical drama which he constantly avoided before writing *Antigone*.⁵⁰ These are the characteristics of

⁴⁷ First published Tue. May 1, 2001; substantive revision Mon Mar 29, 2010.

⁴⁸ John J. Lakich, *The Ideal and Reality in the French Theater of the 1920's*. 2.

⁴⁹ According to Henri Bidou, “*Le reve des jeunes*,” *Journal des debats*, February 18, 1930.

⁵⁰ Leonard C. Pronko, *Critical Essay "The Characters: Psychology and Symbols," in The World of Jean Anouilh*, (University of California Press, 1961), 165-91.

the plays of Molière the master Anouilh has always admired and liked to emulate. It is not surprising to see in Anouilh's plays, characters on whom society has forced a false personality that brought them to the ultimate optimism in their placing man in the center of the universe and their conception of man as a free being. Anouilh glorifies individual acts, so he is rightfully described by Harold Clurman as an anarchist.⁵¹ In Anouilh's mind, *L'Alouette* shows the readers that unconquered heroine who remains true to herself which links *L'Alouette* to the central period of Anouilh's life (1953) and also to a tangible way to a group of preceding group of plays. He is not pessimistic, but he described people as they are and he speculated on what they might do to carry out his plots, which is sometimes an open window for critics. When *Antigone* was presented in Paris at the *Théâtre de l'Atelier* on February 4, 1944, a polemic arose concerning the interpretation of the play and the significance of the two main characters. For many, Antigone symbolized the anti-Nazi Resistance movement; she was a glorious heroine for having said "no" to Creon, the symbol of an external order unjustly imposed. Others labeled the play pro-Nazi; they saw in Creon, who pleads movingly for a compromise that will allow him to continue steering the ship of state, an eloquent champion of the Vichy government's thesis of expediency. For them, Creon was an intelligent organizer, more fascinating than Antigone because whereas she refuses to grow up and learn that not everything in life is rosy, he courageously accepts life in its ugliness. Although Anouilh never publicly took sides in the polemic, his sympathy for Antigone can be inferred from other plays, notably

⁵¹ Clurman, 25.

Becket, in which the heroes and heroines clearly take the extremely conservative position of non-compromise.⁵²

Fazia describes the child-like desire of Anouilh's heroes and heroines as nothing but an endless and ugly vegetation. So powerful is their scorn for life's hope that, just as Joan of Arc is about to recant and Antigone about to accede to her uncle's reasoning, the reminders of Warwick and Creon, respectively, are enough for the heroines once again to prefer death to an act of compromise.⁵³ Like Joan of Arc, Anouilh's heroes are 'little skylarks immobile against the sun, being shot at'--an image which greatly disturbs those have power but not glory. The inquisitor in *L'Alouette*, for example, explains that the smaller, the frailer, the more tender, the purer the enemy, the more formidable he is. When Creon is told that it was a child who covered the grave of Polynices, he muses over the dialogue which he anticipates between himself and the pale, defiant rebel, knowing well that haughty contempt awaits him.

Describing George Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan*, Harold Clurman has written: She has to be stopped, done away with, because like all fanatically persistent moralists, she is a pest, a threat, unbearable to the ordinary. Though she wins in history, she must lose in her person. She herself recognizes this, but cannot and does not wish to curb her force and fail her fate.⁵⁴ Not until the little 'enemies' of the Church or of the State are removed from the scene does stability again reign, but only temporarily, until the next hero arises. After each new hero falls under the Inquisition, or the guillotine, or, more recently, firing squads, silent calm descends upon the State, until the next gunshots are fired at a skylark.

⁵² Fazia, 22.

⁵³ Ibid., 40.

⁵⁴ Clurman, 43.

Anouilh's description of Joan of Arc is suited up also to his other heroes and heroines: 'Joan continues...with that curious mixture of humility and insolence, of grandeur and common sense, even up to the stake, it is in the solitude, in this silence of an absent God, in this deprivation and this bestial misery, that the man who continues to hold his head high is great. Great and alone,'⁵⁵

Anouilh was progressive; he wanted the best for his beloved France so humiliated and her honor stomped on by the World Wars. That gave him the reason to treat in his plays the determinist political force of France; the concept of honor to be defended unto death is basic to Anouilh's plays. The theme, which recurs clearly and frequently, is linked to the playwright's championing of nonconformity, purity, and refusal to compromise:

I am disgusted with your happiness! With your life that must go on, come what may. You could say you are all like dogs that lick everything they find. You with your promise of a humdrum happiness--provided a person doesn't ask much of life. I want everything of life, I do; and I want it total, complete: otherwise I reject it! I will not be moderate. I will not be satisfied with the bit of cake offered for being a good little girl. I want to be sure of everything this very day; sure that everything will be as beautiful as when I was a little girl. If not, I want to die!⁵⁶

Anouilh sees France crawling with worms. He would like to plot a takeover by a strict oligarchy that would stop the decay of his country. He would trust the scrupulousness only of what he calls an *active minority* of extreme conservatives who would set a plague on all political houses and lead France back to her pristine grandeur--to the prescientific, pre-egalitarian days. Anouilh would teach this minority of Frenchmen two concepts: honor and moral rigor. By dying for something incomprehensible to the masses, a small race of men--the *active minority*--has earned the respect of the majority throughout the ages. Fazio said:

⁵⁵Ibid. 42.

⁵⁶ Jean Anouilh, *Antigone* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd. 1951), 19.

Anouilh's political skepticism is complete-anarchist, destroyer, repudiator, passionate individualist, he rejects the concept of a human collectivity capable of governing itself. He does not believe in the virtue of the people who know only to be led by the nose. He glorifies the individual act.⁵⁷ He condemns Robespierre's fixed idea that people, the mediocre masses, are right and that he must act in their name. To protest against the arbitrary choice of victims of the Revolution, Robespierre answers that the arbitrariness of the King is a crime, but the arbitrariness of the people or their representatives is sacred--the exact opposite of Anouilh's belief. The General in *L'hurluberlus* represents the ideal of the past and the glorification of the individual act, as does more humbly but just as nobly, the kitchen aide in a later play, *La Grotte*. The latter's painful effort to remove every eye from the potatoes whose peeling must be as thin as cigarette paper, and his rigid stand for perfection against those who argue that it does not much matter once the potatoes are mashed, are analogous to the General's efforts to restore France to her former virtue.

Anouilh came to the crossroads of what Fazio called "The Race of the Rich and the Race of the Poor." A predominant theme in Anouilh's plays is the opposition and eternal irreconcilable difference of being rich and poor. Being poor he has known and lived it; on the other hand, being rich was a new door opening to Anouilh with the success of his plays and the monetarization of his art. In his early plays (*L'Hermine*), the hero, believing that money could secure love, was driven to committing murder before discovering that wealth and happiness are unrelated. In later play (*La Sauvage*) the impoverished heroine understands that it is not lack of money that prevents the lasting

⁵⁷ Tad Mosel, "*Leading Lady: The World and Theater of Katherine Cornell*". (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1978).

union of herself and her wealthy lover, but rather the fact that their two worlds can never coalesce. She speaks of a “lost dog” (symbolic of her poverty and her sordid past) that has taken the place of money in preventing happiness. Anouilh contradicts *Antigone* or *Jeanne d’Arc* by changing his mind and accepting the corrupted world of the wealthy. The poor in Anouilh’s plays suffer abuses and the rich legislate their morals to control the lower class. Was Anouilh sincere in his ethics? Anouilh does not want to better French society as a whole but rather to encourage a class of conservatives to lead. He stays away from any doctrine that demands a personal commitment, because the number and social instabilities of the human personality and French society in that period of time can be a source of disruption and conflict may arise.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

As last resort it should be remembered that Joan of Arc's story was ideal subject to lay the exordium of any concerns, sometimes they were personal to the low stratum of the society. That lends itself well to George Bernard Shaw's lifelong attitude of underdogs defender. It is obvious why our three playwrights used Joan's story to promote humanist causes. Shaw set French intellectuals straight about the five centuries old mistake of misinterpretation of Joan of Arc's life story.

On one hand, Shaw was flattered rightfully to be addressed to as the Irish Voltaire, the Irish Rousseau and the Irish Molière. That was an admirable intellectual comparison. However, on the other hand, Frenchmen found Shaw inimical, if not downright offensive, to the French spirit. This conflict lies in the essence of Shaw's Pragmatism and French Rationalism. Frenchmen do not like to be confronted with their intellectual shortcomings as Shaw did in *Saint Joan* and the literary world saw it and approved it by rewarding him with a Nobel Prize of Literature. Jean Anouilh missed the opportunity to challenge the English conservatism with *Beckett or the Honor of God*.

Obey was the first to comply with Shaw's vision of Joan of Arc's story, he admitted seeing *Saint Joan* before writing his new allegorical perception of Joan's martyrdom and reason in *La Fenêtre* to a peaceful conclusion. Obey with his religious belief was able to

see behind the philosophical tug-o-war of two historical enemies to tell the truth that the whole world has witnessed and the whole world cannot be wrong and Frenchmen right.

In *L'Alouette*, Anouilh elevated Joan of Arc to the status of national heroine and asserted her dignity through saving the people of France from enslavement during the One Hundred Years War. He wrote *L'Alouette* under suspicion: language and watchful advisers were to carry out the engineering of France political life. It was a role that did not amuse the *avant-garde* class of France political parties and they became Anouilh's bitter enemies.

Anouilh was not a forerunner of the idea to regulate the behavior of the political leaders. Anouilh's argument for acting as social gadfly of France political leaders is found in the famous line in Plato's *The Republic*: unexamined life is not worth living. Anouilh models Socrates' example when he was tried for heresy and Socrates was sentenced to death so were Anouilh's heroes because they refused to compromise. With creative imagination as dramatists Shaw, Obey and Anouilh exemplified bold stage boldness concept to give the theater—the courage to try new and unexplored avenues with new vision to see tomorrow's theater without losing touch with the heritage of the past as humanists.

It is remarkable from the preceding analyses that Joan of Arc's life was re-enacted first from the experience of the three playwrights' lives. Second the inherited vision of their past experiences, based on the sociophilosophical and political dynamic, compelled them to exemplify Joan's life in a play. Third, based on personal artistic creativity from a historical perspective, Jean Anouilh employs historical data in *L'Alouette*, but discounted them because he was less concerned with factual accuracy than he was with the revolt of

the central character, Joan of Arc. That can be substantiated by his ignoring certain events in Joan's life and re-arranging various episodes of *L'Alouette* to suit his own vision of the subject at hand.

The choice of Joan of Arc could not suit better Anouilh's personality and the insecurity that World War I bestowed on him. During World War I, priests and women were the dominant portion of France's population burdened by scarcity of men, and children were left without any protection of men as role models. This absence may have caused Anouilh to choose physically weak and womanish heroes and heroines. That shows that his childhood had a lasting influence on him, enough to affect his personality and creative ability. Anouilh, even in a successful situation, was aloof from public exposure. An ex-law-student, he did not believe in democracy; he believed like Shaw that the majority can be wrong, so he wanted to free himself of any political affiliation to any political group so he could keep his position inflexible to referee the French national political system. *L'Alouette* is the result of this self-appointment to monitor the political arena of his beloved France.

Anouilh's works range from high drama to absurd farce. His career spans more than five decades. Still, Anouilh's works cannot be linked to any particular school or trend. He partly adopts Sartre's existentialist views and is also influenced by the way Louis Jouvet and Jean Giraudoux create theater. Anouilh hated publicity, and remains reclusive all his life. Often his unsuccessful protagonist, idealistic and intransigent, is in conflict with the world of compromise and corruption. He admires Molière and emulates Corneille. That is quite too many intangible factors combined in one playwright's works. However, some elements stand out in most of his plays and those elements cannot be

overlooked in defining the social and philosophical basics of his beliefs. Anouilh believes the true Frenchman's théâtre is the only one that is not gloomy, in which people laugh like men at war without misery and horror, and humor should be France's message to the world. His belief and his philosophy in his plays result from three conditions bestowed on him by unfortunate circumstance:

1. Insecurity due to the hardship of his growing up era.
2. Distrust in the ability of man to tell the truth.
3. Happiness that he sets as goal of his heroes or death.

Anouilh does not trust mankind because he does not believe Frenchmen can defend themselves without being enlightened by his visionary philosophy. The urgency of these messages becomes dominant in his works during and at the end of War World II. For example during World War II, Anouilh's *Léocadia* became a hit. The lyrical fantasy depicted a prince whose love, Léocadia, has died but who finds a new love in a young milliner who resembles her. In 1944 he gained a wide audience with *Antigone*, a version of Sophocles' classical drama, because of its thinly disguised attack on the Nazis and on the Vichy government, led by Marshal Pétain. Otherwise, Anouilh remained mostly aloof from politics, but in the late 1950s he clashed with General de Gaulle whom, he saw as an impostor. The lack of trust and insecurity cause a despair of even possibilities of reconciliation for some of his protagonists. Anouilh's heroes reject compromise in the name of an ethical principle and perish. This idea in the plays of the 1940 bears the quality of despair and is expressed in the spirit of existentialism. However, history has proven that the cornerstone of every Frenchman's philosophy is rationalism. Rationalism wants a logical explanation without any absurdity; that still is the dominant philosophical

thought in France, and it arrives at the truth by logic. Anouilh has a confusing ending to *L'Alouette*, when the reader tries to reconcile his symbolic approach to his refusal to take into account the historical information relevant to Joan of Arc's story. He searches for a dead hero since he can not find any among the living Frenchmen. Anouilh embraces the dead heroine that Shaw redeemed. In contrast to rationalism, the pragmatism of George Bernard Shaw is like presenting someone with the absurdity of his way of thinking.

The implicit argument that said there must be an elite philosopher in society, because his leadership is paramount in the social progress. Philosopher leadership was handed down to Western civilization from Socrates' tradition. Anouilh's argument for acting as social guide of France is found in the famous line in Plato's *The Republic*: an unexamined life is not worth living. Anouilh models Socrates' example when he was tried for heresy. Socrates was tried for encouraging his students to challenge the accepted beliefs of the time and to think for themselves. The sentence for that behavior was death, as Anouilh's heroes and heroines in *Médée*, *Antigone* and *L'Alouette* sentenced themselves to death. Anouilh, however, believes that the alternative has robbed French people because they compromised:

1- They compromised with the French Revolution in 1789 with the *bourgeoisie* as a result of excess of terror of Maximilien Robespierre;

2- The pre-war alliance, French leaders did not believe that Germany would carry on the Schlieffen plan in 1914-18 World War I to attack France.

3- France was taken by surprise in World War II by ignoring the ascension of the Third Reich.

These were too many mistakes that Anouilh could not afford not to correct by suggesting the *examined life* to Frenchmen by questioning their leaders. Is the philosopher needed to structure an ideal society? The answer is no. With the sociochanges the philosopher's role is no longer salutary as in Athenian society. Society has become too complex for philosophers to assume any effective engineering structure. However, Anouilh assigned himself that noble function in French politics.

Philosophy is a study that arrives at the truth by logic. George B. Shaw's philosophy, however, has many points of contact with the pragmatism of Ferdinand Schiller and William James. The pragmatism determines the meaning and truth of all their concepts by their practical consequences. Shaw sees truth and justice, not abstract principles external to man, but as human passions, which have, in his time, conflicted with higher passions as well as with lower ones. With William James, he is at one in the belief that its paleontology, and its prescription may grow stiff with years of veteran service and petrified in man's regard by sheer antiquity; and with Schiller's humanistic doctrine to unascertainable extent truths are man-made products too. To Shaw, as to James, the right is only the expedient in the way of behaving. It stands to reason that Shaw's rationale of life is a very uncompromising presentment of the real old Ireland in his plays.

Fundamentally, Western philosophy is about understanding and analyzing arguments, determining whether a particular claim has relevant evidence provided for it, whether the evidence is logically related to the claim, and thus whether the claim is true, false, indeterminate, or as yet unsubstantiated. Philosophy also continuously exposes and evaluates the often hidden assumptions on which claims are based. Pragmatism takes

these questions and hurls them out the window. Why? Because, say Pragmatists, they are completely pointless because many issues raised in Shaw's plays have been settled, others are not as relevant today as they were early in the 20th century. Disagreements between conservatives and those interested only in grand developments for the sake of profit persist. Concerns about the actions of politicians who pander to the electorate for their own personal preservation are currently widespread. *Man and Superman*, *Major Barbara*, and *John Bull's Other Island* are viewed as a George Bernard Shaw trilogy of philosophical comedies that Henderson identified as comedies destructive of old established morals.

A prolific thinker and human rights activist, Shaw wrote over 60 plays which touched on themes of marriage, religion, government, education, and social class. In order to make these topics more palatable but no less significant to audiences of all generations, he added a comedic aspect. Shaw was an artistic director who believed that great ideas, struggles and relationships could all be revealed through humor.

That is what sets Shaw apart from André Obey and Jean Anouilh. Obey and Anouilh saw things as they were and they asked why before reframing them in *La Fenêtre* et *L'Alouette* to suit France's social and political purposes. George Bernard Shaw dreamed things that never were imaginable, and asked why not? That is a positivism that makes *Saint Joan* intellectually superior to *La Fenêtre* and *L'Alouette*. In the 15th century, the feminist concept was unknown to be related to Joan's struggle and to the religious war (Protestant-Catholic). Those were revolutionary ideas that were the fad in the 20th century demand for social rights. Shaw has only given new terminology to Joan's five-century-old struggle.

Obey's perspective, historically considers the stage in the growth of man's spirit and may be classified under three headings: Faith, Reason, Will. First comes the age of faith: man accepts the precepts of the Bible as the revelation of God's voice. Faith in the Bible becomes the criterion of righteous intention, and for a time the authority of the Church reigns supreme. After a while comes the age of free-thought or Reason; the free-thinker begins to find a reason for not doing what he does not want to do; and these reasons seem to him far more binding on the conscience than the precepts of a book whose divine inspiration cannot be rationally proved. Faith is dethroned by Reason, and rationalist free-thinking comes to mean syllogism worship with rites of human sacrifice. We can see the relation of human sacrifice and the concept of the sacrificed Lamb of Obey. In the course of his life, influenced by his childhood education and World War I experience, Obey re-establishes the old theological doctrine that reason is no motive power; that the true motive power in the world, other than life is Will, and that the setting up of reason above Will is a damnable error, said Shaw. Shaw refuses to acknowledge the validity of the Will of the official theologians, because their God stands outside man and is in authority above him (with the example of Joan of Arc in mind).

Shaw criticizes Anouilh's rational views by pointing out that the cardinal mistake of rationalism is to make happiness the test of the value of life. It is to see the validity of that remark rationale dominant view of the French analysis of Joan of Arc's story. Joan, proud childlike heroine accepts death rather than compromise, thereby gaining absolute moral fulfillment—the goal, her search for happiness. The heroes are resigned to the impossibility of realizing the dream of happiness, and these plays suffer lack of dramatic action.

Anouilh concludes his play *L'Alouette* differently from Bernard Shaw and André Obey. Jean Anouilh was influenced by Shaw's *Saint Joan*, but Anouilh's themes in *L'Alouette* placated the two societies (England and France) of that time. George Bernard Shaw based his play on the life and trial of Joan of Arc, the hypocrisy of her canonization by the Roman Catholic Church with in mind, the play dramatizes what is known of her life based on the substantial records of her trial.

Shaw studied the transcripts and decided that the concerned people acted in good faith according to their beliefs. As shocking as it may seem Shaw concludes that *Saint Joan* is a drama but not a melodrama and also with no villains. Once Anouilh accepts the no melodramatic action of Shaw, he, in turn adopts a new approach with a French nationalistic and rationalistic twist: he reasons that Joan was canonized for her high theological belief not because of her martyrdom; she dies as a saint in a political struggle in which God does not have to choose Henri VI of Lancaster. He accepts the theory of male's complicity and plots to a happy ending in the name of desperate Frenchmen by baptizing Joan as a national heroine, the lark (*L'Alouette*).

There are two basic kinds of human beings in Anouilh's plays: the practical, happy people, who procreate like ordinary mortals (symbolized by Cauchon); and the idealistic heroes, who seek the peace of the truth, even if it is to be found in death (Symbolized by Joan). Joan represents the quest for perfection and the refusal to compromise, a decision which becomes a major theme of this tragedy. The theatrical necessity with basic aspects such as love, family and patriotism is a parallel to Obey's life; it put *La Fenêtre* at the forefront of the role of the Church's reenactment of biblical heroes' drama of the middle Ages, where the Church was teaching through sermons, school wall paintings, and

stained glass. Cecil B. DeMille, the director of the celebrated biblical reenactment of the *Ten Commandments*, announced at the film's opening that that he hoped for the production of the *Ten Commandments* is that those who see it shall come from the theater not only entertained and filled with the sight of a big spectacle, but filled with the spirit of truth. That will bring to its audience a better understanding of the real meaning of this pattern of life that God set down for us to follow.

The underlying assumption of reenactment of biblical heroes is the distrust in humans because of their respective experiences of life: for Obey, the basic aspects of life such as love, family and patriotism are important. Losing his father at eleven years old was a reason to destabilize the loving family life he knew, and in addition to that, his experience of the horrors of World War I prompted him to cherish the theme of peace in his plays by relating them to the old-fashioned method of Church preaching using biblical illustrations to clarify his points. Obey strives to bring peace and stability to France to alleviate her reconciliation with her shameful past. French people are known to relish the memory of their past. They constantly seek to win lost wars, for example: the comic hero Astérix is still fighting the war the Gaulois lost to the Romans. Astérix and his Friend Obélix are two heroes of the *pilote* comic book who have been fighting since 1959 the war lost in 51 B.C. In the comic book Astérix and Obélix after drinking a magic potion, while fighting to protect the village (Gaulois) from the invaders. *La Bataille de la Marne* is another virtual war France refuses to lose in Obey; it poses implicitly the problem of how to stop France's enemy, and the problem is solved by the help of allied aid. Obey reenacts World War I or World War II with wishful thinking for early intervention of the allied forces to stop the invaders. Again, *La Bataille de la Marne* is a

simulation of World War I or World War II. In *La Fenêtre*, Obey triumphs in his effort to settle the historical, intellectual battle between England and France, because he is honest enough to avoid the melodramatic view of French writers.

The important elements of each one of the plays analyzed here are: experience, belief and vision which are the cornerstones of the views of the three playwrights. They all committed to bettering the human condition while entertaining. They succeed in positively influencing England and France. As different as their approaches were, each of them was successful in touching and influencing the national conscience.

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